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A Testament of Alchemy

BEING

THE REVELATIONS OF MORIENUS, ANCIENT ADEPT AND HERMIT OF JERUSALEM

TO

KHALID IBN YAZID IBN MU'AWIYYA, KING OF THE ARABS

OF

THE DIVINE SECRETS OF THE MAGISTERIUM AND ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE ALCHEMICAL ART

Edited and translated from the oldest manuscripts,

with commentary by

LEE STAVENHAGEN

Published for

THE BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY PRESS

by

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS OF NEW ENGLAND

Hanover, New Hampshire

1974

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Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 73-91752
International Standard Book Number 0-87451-095-3
Printed in the United States of America

Preface

Two accomplishments by the modern science of bibliography have made studies such as this feasible. One is the production of comprehensive summary catalogs that can be relied on at least as guides to the manuscript accumulations of a millennium. The Thorndike-Kibre *Catalog of Incipits of Medieval Scientific Writings in Latin* sets the present standard in its field. The other development is the general adoption of microfilm. Libraries all over the Northwestern quadrant owning manuscripts of the work studied here have unfailingly supplied me with legible, portable, storable, and inexpensive film copies. What would Erasmus have done, could he have used such machinery?

A far more sophisticated technology is now under way. The computer combines information storage, access, and reproduction or readout into a single system with universal capacity and instant function. What will the future Erasmus be able to command?

Even if such visions become reality, the scholar himself will probably find his own role not much changed. Whether pushing a pen or pushing buttons, he will still be the practitioner of curiosity who moved Mephisto to wonder:

> Ihn treibt die Gährung in die Ferne;
> Er ist sich seiner Tollheit halb bewusst:
> Vom Himmel fordert er die schönsten Sterne
> Und von der Erde jede höchste Lust,
> Und alle Näh und alle Ferne
> Befriedigt nicht die tiefbewegte Brust.

L.S.

Waltham, Massachusetts
December 1973

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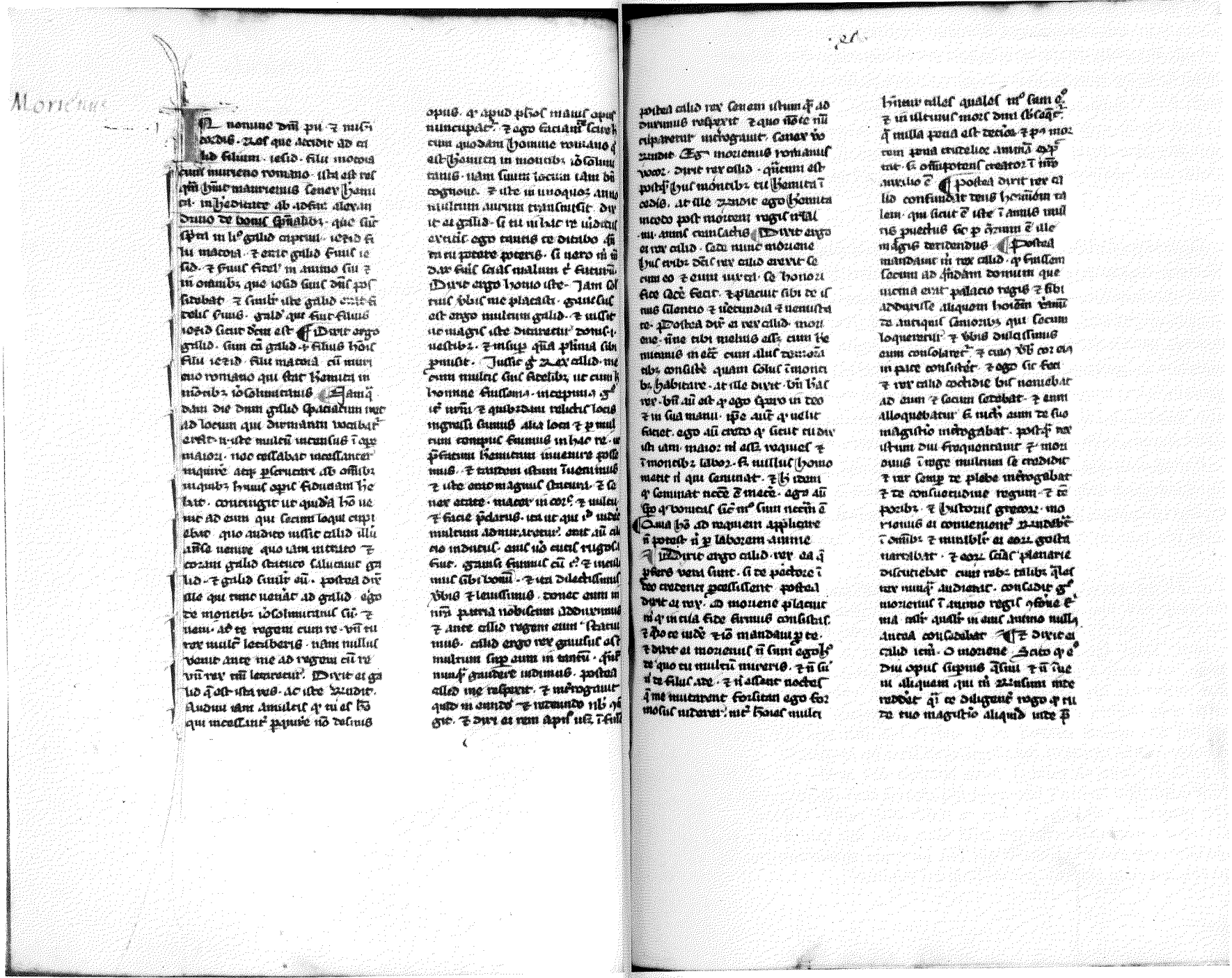

Ms. Glasgow, Hunterian Library 253, 46ᵛ–47.

In nomine Domini pii et misericordis. Res que accidit ad Calid filium Iezid filii Macoia cum Morieno Romano. Ista est res quam habuit Morienus senex heremita in hereditate ab Adfar Alexandrino de bonis spiritualibus que sunt scripta in libro Galib captivi Iezid filii Macoia.

Erat Galib servus Iezid, et servus fidelis in animo suo et in omnibus que Iezid dominus suus possidebat. Et similiter iste Galib erat fidelis servus Calid, qui fuit filius Iezid, sicut dictum est.[1]

Dixit ergo Galib: Fuit causa Calid filio Iezid filii Macoia cum Morieno Romano, qui erat heremita in montibus Ierosolimitanis.[2] Nam quadam die, dum Calid spatiatum iret ad locum qui Dirmanam vocabatur—erat enim iste multum intentus in opere maiore, nec cessabat incessanter inquirere atque perscrutare ab omnibus in quibus huius operis fiduciam habebat—contigit ut quidam homo venit ad eum qui secum loqui cupiebat. Quo audito, iussit Calid illum ante se venire. Quo iam intrato et coram Calid statuto, salutavit Calid, et Calid similiter eum.

Postea dixit ille qui tunc venerat ad Calid: "Ego de montibus Ierosolimitanis sum, et veni ad te regem cum re unde tu rex multum letaberis. Nam nullus venit ante me ad regem cum re unde rex tantum letaretur."

1. All the mss. confuse the names, and several also the persons, of the king and his servant. P has "galid" throughout for both; G, "calid" or "galid"; V and M, "calich" throughout. O_1 first distinguishes "kalid' (rex) from "kalib" (servus), but later confuses the names and adds a third form, "calid," as in general do the other mss. following O_1. Other proper names vary widely in spelling, often even within the same manuscript. In general, I have standardized on variants attested in G and P, but this was not always possible for the names of the adepts cited later by Morienus.

2. G, P: "sum cā galid .i. filius hominis filii iezid . . ." V, M: "fuit calich filio hominis filio zezid filii moavia cum morieno romana (M: roma) . . ." O_1, O_2, L: "fuit cā Kalib (O_2: calid) .i. filius . . ." C: "vixit autem praedictus rex calid filius gesid filii maochoia postmodum cum morieno romano qui fuit heremita jeresolomitaniis. et ad eius noticiam pervenit per modum qui sequitur."

In the name of the Lord, holy and compassionate: this is the story of how Khālid ibn Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyya came into possession of the spiritual riches handed down from Stephanos of Alexandria to Morienus, the aged recluse, as is written in the book of Ghālib, bondsman of Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyya.

Now Ghālib was Yazīd's faithful servant, entrusted with all his master's possessions, and in time, it is said, became faithful servant likewise to Yazīd's son Khālid.

Ghālib relates as follows how Khālid ibn Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyya sought out Morienus the Greek,[3] who lived as a recluse in the mountains of Jerusalem. One day, Khālid went abroad to a place called Dirmanam. He was assiduous in his quest for the Major Work, continually inquiring after any and all whom he supposed to be privy to this operation, and on this occasion a certain man came to him and desired to speak with him. Hearing of this, Khālid bid the man come before him. He saluted Khālid, and Khālid returned his greeting.

The fellow then spoke thus to Khālid: "I dwell in the mountains of Jerusalem, and I have come to you, O king, with delightful news. Never has anyone before me given any king such cause to rejoice."

3. Arabic *rūmī*, "Greek." See the Commentary, pp. 62–63.

Dixit ei Calid: "Quenam est ista res?"

Ac iste respondit: "Audivi iam a multis quod tu es homo qui incessanter perquirere non desinis opus quod apud philosophos maius opus nuncupatur. Et ego faciam te scire hoc cum quodam homine romano qui est heremita in montibus Ierosolimitanis, nam suum locum iam bene cognovi. Et iste in unoquoque anno multum aurum Ierosolimam transmittit."

Dixit ei Calid: "Si tu michi in hac re veridicus extiteris, ego tantis te ditabo bonis quanta tu petere poteris.[4] Si vero michi mendax fueris, scias malum tibi futurum."

Dixit ergo homo iste: "Iam tuis solis verbis me placasti."

Gavisus est ergo multum Calid, et iussit ut magis iste ditaretur donis et vestibus et insuper quamplurima sibi promisit. Iussit ergo rex Calid me cum multis suis fidelibus ut cum hoc homine fuissemus.[5]

Incepimus ergo iter et quibusdam relictis locis, ingressi sumus alia loca, et per multum tempus eundo fuimus in hac re, ut per fatum heremitam invenire possemus, quem tandem invenimus. Et ille erat magnus statura et senex etate, macer in corpore, et vultu et facie preclarus, ita ut qui illud videret, multum admiraretur. Erat autem cilicio indutus, eius vero cutis rugosa fuit. Gavisi sumus cum illo et intulimus sibi bonum. Et ita eum dulcissimis verbis lenivimus donec eum in nostram patriam nobiscum adduximus et ante Calid regem eum statuimus.

Calid ergo rex gavisus est multum super eum in tantum quantum numquam eum gaudere vidimus. Postea Calid me respexit et interrogavit quid in eundo et redeundo nobis contigit, et dixi ei rem a principio usque in finem. Postea Calid rex senem istum quem adduximus respexit et quo nomine nuncuparetur interrogavit.

Senex vero respondit: "Ego Morienus Romanus vocor."

4. The scribe of C was the son of a more practical age: ". . . quanta tu racionabiliter petere poteris."

5. M: "Iussit ergo rex calich michi . . . ut cum homine iremus." This is one of the very few places where M differs from V, before switching to the revised dialogue text (see below, p. 57).

"And what is this news?" asked Khālid.

He replied: "I have heard many say that it is you who continually seek after the operation which the philosophers call the Major Work. I will bring you to the knowledge of it through a certain Romaean, who lives as a recluse in the mountains of Jerusalem, but whose dwelling place I well know. He sends large amounts of gold to Jerusalem every year."

Khālid said to him: "If I find that you have told the truth, I will reward you with whatever you may ask.[6] But if you have lied, you may expect the worst."

"Well," the fellow replied, "so be it."

Then Khālid rejoiced greatly and commanded that the man be rewarded with gifts and raiment and much else, as he had promised him. And the king commanded me along with many other of his servants to go with him.

And so we set out. After wasting much time going from one place to another, in hopes of chancing upon the recluse, we did indeed find him. He was tall of stature, though aged, and although lean, so noble of countenance and visage that he was a marvel to behold. Yet he wore a hair shirt, the marks of which were borne on his skin. We rejoiced to have found him and spoke kindly to him, at last persuading him with sweet words to relent, and brought him with us back to our own country, there presenting him to King Khālid.

Never before had we seen the king so pleased by anything. At last he turned to me and asked what had befallen us in going and coming, and I told him the story from beginning to end. Then the king regarded the aged man we had brought and wished to know by what name he was called.

The elder replied: "I am called Morienus the Greek."

6. C: "within reason"

Dixit rex Calid: "Quantum habes postquam hiis montibus tu heremita incedis?"

At ille respondit: "Ego heremita incedo post mortem regis Hircal .iiii. annis transactis."[7]

Dixit ergo ei rex Calid: "Sede nunc, Moriene."

Hiis itaque dictis, rex Calid erexit secum eo et eum iuxta se honorifice sedere fecit. Et placuit sibi de istius silentio et verecundia et venustate.

Postea dixit ei rex Calid: "Moriene, nonne tibi melius esset, cum heremita sis, in ecclesia cum aliis demorantibus consistere, quam solus in montibus habitare?"

At ille dixit: "Bene habeas, rex. Bonum autem quod ego spero in deo et in sua manu est. Ipse autem quod velit faciet. Ego autem credo quod sicut tu dixisti iam maior michi esset requies quam in montibus labor, sed nullus homo metit nisi qui seminat, et hoc idem quod seminat necesse est metere. Ego autem spero quod bonitas sicut modo sum mecum est. Quia homo se ad requiem applicare non potest nisi per laborem anime."

Dixit ergo Calid rex: "Ea que profers vera sunt, si de pectore in deo credente processissent." Postea dixit ei rex: "O Moriene, placuit michi quod in tua fide firmus consistis. Et volui te videre, et idcirco mandavi pro te."

Et dixit ei Morienus: "Non sum ego homo de quo tu multum mireris, et non sum nisi de filiis Ade. Et nisi essent dies noctesque que me mutaverint, forsitan ego formosus viderer. Inter homines multi habentur tales quales modo sum ego. Et in ultimis mors dira subsequitur, qua nulla pena est deterior, et post mortem pena crudelior animam expectat. Sed omnipotens creator in nostro est auxilio."

Postea dixit rex Calid: "Confundat deus hominem talem, qui sicut est ille in annis multis provectus, sic per contrarium est ille magis deridendus."

Postea mandavit michi rex Calid quod fuissem secum ad quandam domum que vicina erat palacio regis et aduxissem aliquem hominem christianum de antiquis senioribus qui secum loqueretur

7. G: "regis irlal . . ." P: "hrrcal" V: "irlral" M: "isil' " The rest give "hircal" or "hirkal." I.e., Herakleios I, Byzantine emperor (610–641).

And Khālid asked: "How long is it now that you have dwelt as a recluse in these mountains?"

He replied: "I began my retreat four years after the death of King Herakleios."[8]

Then the king bade Morienus be seated, and himself arose to give Morienus a place of honor beside him, much pleased with his reserve, modesty, and elegance.

The king said to him: "O Morienus, recluse though you be, would it not be better that you live in the congregation of others, rather than alone in the mountains?"

He said: "Perhaps, O king. But the virtues I look for are in God and in his hand, who will do as he will. And while I grant that, as you have said, life might be easier for me than in the mountains, still only he who sows shall reap, and he must reap that which he has sown. Now I trust that I have gained some little virtue of my own. A man cannot attain repose except through labors of the spirit."

Then the king said: "These things are true, if said from the heart by one believing in God. O Morienus, I am pleased that you continue in your faith. I wished to see you and therefore sent for you."

Morienus said to him: "You need not marvel at one such as me, a mere son of the race of Adam. At best, I might only be somewhat comelier, except that the passage of time has altered me. There are many like me among men. And at the end is cruel death, than which no punishment is worse; yet a harsher punishment awaits the spirit after death. But the almighty Creator be our aid."

The king replied: "Thus God may confound man, who is only scorned the more, the more he is advanced in age."

Then the king commanded me to conduct Morienus to a dwelling near the royal palace and to fetch one of the Christian elders

8. I.e., A.D. 645. A principal benefit of alchemical adepthood was long life. Khālid (who belongs to the end of the seventh century) is here probing Morienus' authenticity.

et verbis dulcissimis eum consolaretur et cuius verbis cor eius in pace consisteret. Et ego sic feci. Et rex Calid cotidie bis veniebat ad eum et secum sedebat et eum alloquebatur, sed nichil eum de suo magisterio interrogabat.

Postquam rex istum diu frequentavit et Morienus in rege multum se credidit, et rex semper de plebe interrogabat et de consuetudine regum et temporibus et grecorum historiis. Morienus ei convenienter respondebat in omnibus, et mirabiliter ei eorum gesta narrabat et eorum sciencias plenarie discuciebat cum rebus talibus quales rex numquam audierat. Consedit ergo Morienus in animo regis confessione firma taliter qualiter in eius animo nullus antea consederat.

Et dixit ei Calid iterum: "O Moriene, scito quod ego diu opus superius quesivi, et non inveni aliquem qui michi responsum inde redderet. Quare te diligenter rogo quod tu de tuo magisterio aliquid inde prepares, et habebis super me quantum tu petieris. Et faciam te redire ad terram tuam et quod tu nullatenus deinceps me timeas, si deus voluerit."

Dixit Morienus ei: "O rex, deus ad bonum te convertat. Nunc bene scio quod tu non misisti propter me nisi quia magnum opus habebas de me. Sed propter decentiam quod dixisti, sc. quod te non timerem, iam talem applicaturam michi non applicui, postquam opus non habeo timere aliquem nisi solum deum, et tu applicuisti me in tuo animo sicut talem qualis tu es. Et vidi de tua pietate, et de tua bonitate, et de tua dilectione, quod non est opus tali, qualis ego sum, tibi aliqua celare de quibus tu queris, et maxime quia tu es homo boni animi et bonorum actuum et multum querens bonum. Iam nunc tu te ad tuum initium applicuisti, et ad tuam inquisitionem, cum minori re et leniori quam possit esse. Sit creator benedictus."

Tunc rex Calid subrisit et postea dixit: "Omnis homo cui non predest patientia, impedit eum festina crudelitas. Quia festinatio ex parte diaboli est. Ego sum filius Macoia, et non est fortitudo nisi cum deo summo magno et alto."

who might speak with him and comfort him with sweet words, and thus set his heart at peace. I did so, and the king made it his custom to come twice every day to Morienus, sitting down with him and speaking with him, but asking him nothing concerning his magistery.[9]

The king often stayed long, and Morienus confided greatly in him. Khālid inquired repeatedly about the customs both royal and common of the Greeks, and about their times and histories. Never at a loss for a reply, Morienus retold the marvels of their deeds and discoursed expertly on their sciences, all matters such as the king had never before heard. Nor had anyone before ever held such a firm place in the king's affection as Morienus soon came to hold.

Eventually Khālid addressed him: "O Morienus, know that I have long sought the Superior Work, but found none to counsel me in this matter. Therefore I earnestly request that you prepare for me some portion of your magistery. You shall have from me then whatever you may ask, and I will see to it that you return to your own land, God willing. Nor need you thenceforth have any fear of me."

Morienus said to him: "O king, may God enrich you. Now I understand that you have sent for me only out of great need. But I disregard the kind assurance you added, namely that I should not fear you, inasmuch as I have no need to fear anyone save God alone. You have approached me as an equal in spirit, and now I see by your affection, excellence, and discrimination that one such as I should have no reason to keep from you anything of that which you seek, for you are indeed a man of good intentions as well as deeds and most virtuous. Very well, you have attained to your initiation and instruction simply and with the greatest ease. May the Creator be praised!"

At this, King Khālid smiled, and then said: "The crudeness of haste ensnares any man, unless he be ruled by patience. I am of the house of Mu'āwiyya, and there is no strength save in great God most high."

9. I.e., his mastery of the goldmaking art; regularly used as the technical term for the chemical operation.

Et postea dixit Morienus: "O rex, deus ad bonum te convertat. Esto ad iudicium huius operis et scies illud bene et intelliges, et cogita in eius introitum atque in eius exitum, et scies si deus voluerit omnia que ei pertinent. Quia istam rem, quam tu diu quesivisti, non poterit aliquis perpetrare nec perfectare, nec potuerit ad istam applicare ab aliquo sapiente nisi per dilectionem et humilitatem molliciem et amorem perfectum atque verum. Et est ista res quam deus adducit suis fidelibus quibus illam adducere disposuit cum fortitudine maiori usquedum sibi parat hominem a quo eam sciat et eam sibi detegat a suis secretis. Nec ista res aliquid est nisi donum dei, qui eam cui vult ex suis servis demonstrat, qui sibi sunt humiles et in omnibus subditi."

Et dixit ei Calid: "Scimus vere quod nulla res perfici potest sine dei auxilio et eius demonstratione qui est altissimus et immutabilis."

Postea vero dixit rex Calid: "O Galib, sede cito et scribe quicquod nos a modo inter nos habuimus."

Et postea dixit Morienus: "Omnipotens deus et creator ex potentia servos inpotentes creavit, quia ipsi non possunt retrahere ea que ipse proposuit, nec proponere ea que retrahit iste, nec etiam ipsi aliquid scire possunt nisi hoc quod ipse demonstrat, nec illi possunt consequi nisi hoc quod iste eis attribuit, nec etiam ipsi possunt aliquid habere nisi secundum fortitudinem ab ipso deo eis collatam, neque etiam animos suos regere possunt nisi quamdiu et quantum eis mandaverit. Et iste posuit ex suis servis eos quos voluit et quos elegit ut quererent sapientiam ab eo datam que dominum suum extrahit ab huius mundi miseria et ad bona futuri seculi eum reducit, si deus voluerit. Et semper isti unus post alium hanc sapientiam sibi hereditabant. Et postea hec sapientia est destructa, et eius domini similiter sunt deiecti, nec etiam huius sapientie magistros inveniri potuerunt. Et remanserunt de libris recte expositis qui erant libri sapientum antiquorum qui ante nos fuerunt et suos posteros de hac scientia hereditaverunt, istos quos deus voluit eam adipisci, secundum modum quem ipsi antea exposuerant sine omni mendacio et absque omnibus frivolis. Sed ipsi res ad hanc scientiam pertinentes non rectis nominibus nominabant. Sed nos scimus veraciter quod ipsi etiam eas iam exposuerunt circumnominando eas, et hoc fecerunt

Morienus then said: "O king, may God enrich you. Now attend to the examination of this operation, and you will know it well and understand. Consider it thoroughly from beginning to end, and you will know all things that pertain to it, God willing. No one will be able to perform or accomplish this thing which you have so long sought or attain it by means of any knowledge unless it be through affection and gentle humility, a perfect and true love. For this is something which God gives into the sure keeping of his elected servants until such time as he may prepare one to whom it may be handed on from among his secrets. Thus it is only the gift of God, who chooses among his humble and obedient servants those to whom he reveals it."

Khālid said to him: "Surely we know that nothing can be done without the help and guidance of God, most high and eternal."

Then King Khālid said to me: "O Ghālib, quickly now, sit down and write all that we have said."

Thereupon Morienus continued: "Almighty God in his power created powerless servants who can neither undo what he has done nor advance what he holds back, nor can they even know anything except what he reveals to them or accomplish anything except what he grants to them. Nor are they able even to possess anything except by the strength that same God has conferred upon them, nor even govern their own spirits except insofar and so long as he has ordained for them. And from among his servants, he chose to select certain ones to seek after the knowledge he had established that rescues him who masters it from the wretchedness of this world and assures him riches to come, God willing. While those so chosen used to hand down this knowledge to their own heirs, it was at last lost and its masters dispossessed of it when none could be found any more who knew it. But of the books which set forth the matter correctly there remained a few by the ancient seers who went before us. They left their knowledge as a legacy to their successors, whom God had chosen to become adepts according to the methods that had been explained truthfully and forthrightly by their predecessors. The ancients, however, did not refer to the matters pertaining to this science by their proper names, speaking instead, as we truly

ut malicia stultorum destrueretur. Et hoc totum egerunt cum sententiis fortissimis et dictis veridicis, et locuti sunt de eis per similitudinem, ut illi qui magne sapientie forent atque magni ingenii eorum dicta aperire potuissent. Et quam illi hanc scientiam a proprio suo statu mutaverunt, necesse est eos qui eam discere volunt eorum dicta intelligere, nec convenit istos ab ea retrahi et quod eorum spes in deo figatur et ipsam spem ad hoc efflagitent ut faciat eos eam scire. Et ad res meliores eos convertat et faciat eos habere modum huius scientie super lineam rectam sine omni deviatione."

Postea dixit vero rex Calid: "Iam Moriene, bene dixisti et commendasti, et hec mandata non sunt a me multum remota, et maxime quam talis qualis tu es in sapientia et in tuis annis voluisti michi hanc scientiam a te adipisci.[10] Explana michi ergo bona explanatione hoc quod te interrogo, ne michi sit necesse multum cogitare in hac re quam quero a te, et dic michi si hoc opus ex una sola re tantummodo fiat an ex pluribus."

Dixit ergo Morienus: "Omnis autem res multorum testimonio veracior comprobatur, et ego nominabo tibi hoc quod de hac re queris et alia quam plurima secundum testimonia sapientum, que cum inspexeris et in eis multum studiens invenies quod hoc quod in suis libris commendaverunt sit verum. Sed hoc quod de radice eius interrogasti, verum si de una re fiat, an de multis: scias quod radix eius sit una, et res una atque una substancia, et de eo est unum et cum eo fit, nec additur super eum aliquid nec diminuitur aliquid de eo. Et iam dixit Hircal[11] ad quosdam discipulorum cum ipsi interrogaverunt eum de hoc quod tu me interrogasti; dixit istis in primis qui de una radice fit que postea in multas res expanditur et iterum ad unam revertuntur. Et scias quod necesse est aerem attingere. Dixit Arsitanus[12] quod .iiii.

10. The Morienus prologue ends here. At this point, all the mss. except G, P, V and M begin the revised text which first appears in O_1 (inc.: "O Moriene, primum querere libet que et qualis sit huius rei substantia principalis et materia . . ."). See the Commentary, p. 54.

11. G: "F." P: "h'u'ba" V: "ARHEL"

12. I.e., Ostanes, legendary Egyptian or Persian priest.

know, in circumlocutions, in order to confute fools in their evil intentions. This they did by formulating their convictions and true sayings always in parables, so that only those of great wisdom and resource would be able to uncover their true meaning. Since the ancients thus disguised this knowledge, those who would learn it must understand their maxims. Nor may they draw back from this, but must fix their faith in God and persist to the end that he bring them to this knowledge, improve their estate, and give them direct, unerring access to the methods of this science."

King Khālid then said: "Now well taught and well spoken, O Morienus, nor do I hold these precepts strange, coming as they do from a teacher of such wisdom and years as yourself, who is willing that I should learn this science. Therefore explain to me clearly that which I ask of you, sparing me needless labor over this matter which I seek from you. Tell me whether this operation is accomplished only by a single principle or by several."

*Morienus spoke: "All is truly attested by many, and I will declare to you that which you seek and many other matters according to testimonies of the authorities. When you have examined these sayings and given them much study, you will find that what the authorities taught in their books is true. Now in answer to your question as to whether this operation has one root or many, know that it has but one, and but one matter and one substance of which and with which alone it is done, nor is anything added to it or subtracted from it. When certain of his disciples asked Herakleios what you have asked me, he told them how a single root grows into many things which return again to one, if they get air. Ostanes declared that the four elements, heat,

*Compare the passages between asterisks with the extracts of other texts given in Appendix II.

elementa sunt de uno, sc. calor, humiditas, frigiditas et siccitas, et quedam istorum ex hiisdem aliis constituuntur. Et ex istis .iiii. quedam sunt quam radices et quedam quam ex hiis radicibus composita. Que vero sunt radices sunt aqua et ignis; que vero ex hiis composita sunt terra et aer. Et iterum dixit Arsitanus ad Mariam[13] quod nostra azoc[14] quoque est que habet superantiam super nostram terram, quia est magis lucida et pura et de grossissima aqua creata est terra. Et dixit Hermes quod terra mater sit elementorum et de ea sunt nata et ad eam revertuntur. Et dixit Moyses quod omnia de terra procedunt et ad eam revertuntur. Dixit Hermes: sicut omnia ex uno procedunt, sic et hoc opus maius de una re fit et de una substancia, et sicut homo habet in suo corpore .iiii. elementa, sic deus creavit ea et sicca et disiuncta et coniuncta et collata atque expansa, quia unum corpus ea coniungit. Et tamen unumquodque opus operatur quod differt ab opere sui socii, nec habet unum colorem nec unum dominium, et sic res ista datur intelligeri. Et de talibus testimoniis philosophi multa dixerunt."

Rex ait tunc Calid: "Quo potest hoc esse, quod huius operis maioris una sit radix et una substancia, cum apud quosdam eius radicis nomina multa et multiplicata inveniuntur?"

Dixit Morienus: "Multiplicata sunt eius nomina, sed tum ego unam dixi et adhuc nominabo tibi testes ex sapientibus qui magis tibi ea que dixi affirmabunt."

Dixit ergo rex Calid: "Perfice michi narrando huius operis magisterium."

Dixit Morienus: "Hircal[15] dixit ad quosdam suorum discipulorum quod lapillus dactili ex palma et palma ex lapillo, ex eodem lapillo arbor palmarum procreatur, et ex radice eius concrescunt ramuli qui suum numerum adaugent. Et propter hoc dixit Hermes: respice qui rubeum completur per rubeum diminutum in sua rubedine, et omnem rubedinem, et aspice citrinum completum et citrinum diminutum de sua citrinitate, et omnem citrinitatem. Et similiter aspice nigrum completum et nigrum

13. G, V: "morienem." Maria the Copt, a prime alchemical authority, was portrayed as Ostanes' disciple.

14. Arabic *az-zā'ūq*, "mercury"

15. G: "herbel"; P: "h'lrl"; V: "ARCHEL"

wetness, cold, and dryness, are basically one, and that certain of these four are compounded of the others, as though some were roots of which the others are composed. The true roots are water and fire, and composed of these are earth and air. Also, Ostanes said to Maria that it is our quicksilver[16] that has dominance over our earth, being very clear and pure, while earth is made of crudest water. And Hermes said that earth is the mother of the elements, which are born of her and return to her. Moses, too, said that all things come of the earth and return to it. As Hermes said, just as all things come of one, so also is the Great Work done with one thing and one substance. Even so does man contain the four elements united in his body, though God created them variously as dry or separate, joined and collected or scattered. But each operation functions in a different way, having its own color and proper application. It is thus that this matter is to be understood. The philosophers have given many such confirmations."

King Khālid then replied: "How can it be that the Major Work should have but one root and one substance? Many authorities refer to its root by a great number of different names."

Morienus said: "Its names may vary, yet I say it is but one. On this point I will cite the authorities to you, who will further confirm what I have said."

King Khālid said: "Tell me all concerning the mastery of this operation."

Morienus said: "Herakleios said to certain of his disciples that just as the date is brought fourth by the palm, so also is the palm tree produced of that same date, and from its root grow the shoots by which it multiplies. And on this point, Hermes said: consider how red is made complete by partial degrees of redness. Consider also red as a whole, and the full yellow, and partial degrees of yellowness, and yellow as a whole. And likewise full

16. The alchemists speak of substances in the possessive to indicate their special nature, distinguishing them from their crude or naturally occurring forms.

diminutum de sua nigredine, et omnem nigredinem. Et spica ex grano procedit, et rami multi ex arbore et arbor ex suo germine. Et dixit quidam sapiens qui propter deum totum reliquerat mundum talem qualem hoc quod diximus, i.e., ex spermate vir procreatur, et de uno grano .c. grana procreantur, et de germine magna concrescit arbor. Et ex uno homine extrahitur mulier, et postea ex ambobus procreantur multi filii, quorum dissimilis est color atque aspectus. Et iterum dixit sapiens: aspice sartorem qui pannos suere consuevit, cum de pannis interulam sive aliam quamlibet composuit vestem, quia non de alio nisi de panno eam componit, quam thorale et manice et girones ex panno fiunt et etiam cum eo ipsam suit quia fila sua ex se ipsa sunt et non indiget aliis. Et sicut est hoc opus maius ipsum per se consistens, et non indiget alio, quia apud philosophos rectum et absconditum est. Et tum mille nominibus ipsum nominaverunt in omni loco in quo est, et est sigillatum et patens non nisi sapientibus, quia ipsi ipsum multum narrant et ornant. Et stulti hoc opus minus derident et apud ipsos pro minimo reputatur. Et non sciunt quid sit illud. Et haec nomina sunt multa que sapientes in suis libris nominaverunt, quorum unum est sperma, quod cum vertitur in sanguine mutatur, et postea fit quasi frustum carnis commixtum. Et sic una creatura alteram succedit et forma recedit, donec homo fiat. Et ex hiis nominibus est aliud nomen, ut est palma, et hoc est quod ex colore eius pomorum et eius naturarum antequam perveniant ad suam postremitatem. Et ex hiis nominibus est ut arbor malorum granorum,[17] et ut est triticum, et lac, et alia multa nomina quorum radix una est, sed eorum opus mutat ea et eis innovat multos colores et multas naturas et nomina multa. Et dixit enim Akaifrem.[18] ego veritatem dico, quod nichil aliud deduxit huius operis magistros in errorem nisi nominum multitudo. Sed si quis sciverit quod haec nomina non sunt nisi colores in coniunctione apparentes, non errabit in huius operis via."

17. P: "malorum gen'at." V: "mala granatorum"

18. P: "akaystrem"; V: "ALIUS." Perhaps Agathodaimon, frequently cited as one of the alchemical fathers.

black and partial degrees of blackness, and black as a whole.*[19] As the shoot emerges from a grain, so also do the many branches from the tree and the tree from its seed. A certain seer who entirely renounced the world also said things such as we have spoken, namely, that man is produced of a sperm, just as of a single grain a hundred are brought forth, from which a great tree grows. Thus too was woman made of one man, but then of both are born many children, each of different color and appearance. *Again the seer says: consider the tailor sewing his cloth, of which he has made a shift or some other garment, using only the cloth. The top, the sleeves and the skirt are all of cloth, and even sewn with thread which is itself of cloth, nothing else being required. Thus also does the Major Work consist in itself, requiring nothing else, the proper secret of the philosophers. They moreover called it everywhere by many names, concealing it thus from all but the wise, who set forth and greatly extol this operation. But fools despise it and hold it of no account, ignorant of what it is. The wise used many terms in the books, one being "sperm," which, when converted, becomes blood, and then is consolidated with the flesh as though part of it. Thus the process of generation proceeds by a succession of forms, until man is made.* Another simile is that of the palm, on account of the color and natures of its fruits before they ripen. *Others are such as the tree of bad seed, or wheat, or milk, or many other names. Though all have but one root, there is an operation that alters each one, giving many new colors and natures, hence many names. Akaifrem said truly that it is only the multitude of terms which causes the masters of this operation to err. But one who knows that these terms are only like the many colors seen at conjunction[20] will not stray from the true path of this operation."

19. Each stage of the alchemical operation had its proper color, beginning ordinarily with black, the sign of putrefaction, and culminating in the display characteristic of the particular elixir being prepared.

20. The union of ennobling spirit with cleansed, neutral matter to yield alchemical gold, characterized by a rainbow display.

Et iterum interrogavit eum rex Calid, et dixit ei: "Fac me intelligere de istis coloribus qui de uno colore mutatur in alium, et utrum in una compositione aut in duabus seu in pluribus sic mutuentur."

At ille ei respondit: "In una vice fiunt, et quanto magis ignis calorem eis innovat, tanto magis eis plurima imponuntur nomina. Et sic dixit Rosinus ad Euthesiam:[21] ego tibi ostendam quod sapientes non multiplicaverunt sua dicta necque compositiones nisi idcirco, quia voluerunt quod de eis intellexissent homines sapientie et consilii, et homines insipientie excecavissent, et ad hoc ostendit se quod sapientes sic posuerunt in suis libris et multiplicaverunt has vices. Non est opus huius operis magisterio quia ei una vicis et via est. Et sic quamvis omnes sapientes mutaverunt nomina et dicta, noluerunt tum intelligere nisi unam rem et viam unam atque vicem unam. Ergo rex, non queras amplius de hoc quod hactenus interrogasti, cum hec que iam dicta sunt tibi sufficiant, quia sapientes nominaverunt multas compositiones et multa pondera et multos colores, et sic allegorizaverunt, i.e., alienis verbis seduxerunt semper homines, nec tamen sunt mentiti, sed sunt locuti quod videbant in artificio huius operis et secundum quod ad invicem intelligebant, ut alios hoc lateret."

Dixit ergo rex Calid: "Ego interrogo te ut michi manifestes suum colorem, sicut iam dixisti michi suam naturam, et hoc veraciter sine allegoria aut similitudine."

Dixit ei Morienus: "Semper erat mos sapientum quod faciebant esentiam,[22] i.e., alumen, de eo et cum eo antequam aliquid cum eo tingerent. Sufficit modo quod dico tibi hoc quod dixit Rosinus, qui dixit quod sicut laton quamvis in primis sit rubeus, non

21. P: "rosissmus ad euthisian"; V: "DANCIN ad euchesia." These spellings are plainly the result of successive transliterations, into Arabic and then Latin, of the Greek names Zosimos and Theosebeia.

22. G, P: "ee"; V: "suum azeb: alumen"; Ar. *ash-shabb* "alum"

Then King Khālid inquired further of him and said: "Now let me know concerning these colors how the change from one to another occurs, whether in a single composition, in two, or in many."

Morienus answered: "They are made in a single stage, but their names increase in number as the fire increases their heat. Zosimos spoke thus to Theosebeia:[23] I will show you that the wise varied their maxims and compositions only because they wished them to be understood by men of wisdom and prudence, while the ignorant should remain blind to them; clearly it was for this reason that the wise wrote variously in their books of the stages of the operation. There is but one stage and one path necessary for its mastery. Although all the authorities used different names and maxims, they meant to refer to but one thing, one path and one stage. Hence, O king, you need inquire no further on this point, since what has already been said suffices. The wise spoke of many compositions, masses, and colors in the manner of parables, by which men are always misled. Still, they did not lie, but as they learned the craft of this operation only declared what they saw in such a way that it should escape others."*

Then King Khālid said: "I ask you to explain its color to me as you already have declared its nature, truly and without allegories or similes."

Morienus replied: "The authorities customarily first made an essence or alum of it and by means of it before treating anything with it. Perhaps it is enough that I quote Zosimus to you, who said that even though latten may be red at first, still you will

23. A number of Greek tracts are attributed to Zosimos of Panopolis, who purportedly lived in the 3d century A.D. and is frequently cited as a major alchemical authority. An allegorical sister (here Theosebeia, legendary Egyptian queen) was often associated with the alchemist in reference to union of the opposing natural principles or humors (cf. Ostanes and Maria, p. 14 above, or Moses and Miriam, p. 20 below.)

habebunt tum proficuum de eo donec album fiat. Et propter hoc quod dixit Rosinus ad Euthesiam, quod in primis est nigredo, ista res sit tecum firma et bene condita, et propter dictum quod dixerunt, iam abstulimus nigredinem et facimus albedinem cum sale et cum anatron,[24] et cum re que est frigida et sicca. Tunc ei impones hoc nomen: borich.[25] Et comprobas dictum quod Rosinus dixit, quod in primis est nigredo, et tunc faciunt illud album cum sale, i.e. aere, et anatron, i.e. igne, quoniam fit rubeum in primis et in postremis album factum est, et aufert ab eo suam nigredinem, et postea vertitur in rubeum multum lucidum. Et dixit Maria[26] quod cum laton, i.e. terra, comburitur cum alkibris,[27] i.e. sulfur, et vertit super eam molliciem donec ruat, i.e. ferveat, vertitur in melius quam non erat nisi cum dei auxilio. [28]Et dixit alius quod cum laton fuerit decoctus donec sit lucidus velud oculi piscium, expecta suum bonum, et quod adhuc vertetur ad suam naturam atque colorem.[28] Et dixit alius: scito quod quanto magis aliquid abluetur, tanto magis limpidus apparebit et melius, et si ablutum non fuerit, non limpidabitur neque ad suum colorem vertetur. Et dixit Maria quod nichil est quod possit a latone, i.e. terra, suam umbram, i.e. nigredinem vel suum colorem, auferre, sed azoc est suum tegumentum in primis cum laton decoquitur, nam eum colorat et album reddit, et postea laton vertitur super eum, i.e. azoc, et reddit eum rubeum. Et dixit philosophos quod azoc non potest substantialiter auferre a latone suum colorem vel eum mutare nisi secundum visum. Sed laton, i.e. terra, potest substantialiter auferre ab azoc, i.e. argentum vivum, suam albedinem, quia inest eo mirabilis fortitudo que facit omnes colores apparere cum colores fuerunt abluti et que aufert suam nigredinem atque immunditiam et fit album, tunc non propter latonem, qui faciat eum rubeum. Et dixit Rosinus

24. Ar. *an-natrūn* "natron"
25. Ar. *bauraq* "borax"; G omits, leaving space; P omits.
26. Maria prophetissa or Mary the Jewess, associated with Miriam, sister of Moses.
27. Ar. *al-kibrīt* "sulfur"
28. V omits "Et . . . colorem"

have no profit of it until it is whitened.[29] Now, be assured by the authority of Zosimos in this matter, who said to Theosebeia that blackness is first; according to this maxim then, after we have removed the blackness and achieved whitening with salt and natron, and a cold and dry substance, you call it "borax," and verify Zosimos' statement that blackness is first, for when it is whitened with salt, which is air, and natron, which is fire, it is made red before it is finally whitened, which removes its blackness so that it is then changed to a very clear red. And Maria said that when latten, or earth, is burned with sulfur until it softens and flows or boils, it is turned into something so fine as existed only by God's aid. And another authority said to look for one's reward when latten has been refined until it shines like fish eyes, for then it has been converted to its basic nature and color. And another said: know that the more a substance is washed, the clearer and better it will appear, but if it is not washed, it will not become clear nor be reduced to its own nature. Maria also said that there is nothing which can remove from latten, or earth, its darkness, or proper color of blackness, but quicksilver covers it at first, turning it white; then the latten overcomes the quicksilver, and reddens it.[30] And a philosopher said that quicksilver cannot remove from latten the substance of its color, or change it except in appearance. But latten, or earth, can take on the substance of whiteness from quicksilver, which has a marvelous power to cause all the colors to appear after washing, removing blackness and impurity and rendering white, except in the case of latten, which reddens it. And Zosimos said that only

29. The reddish or yellow tint of copper alloys (latten) was hopefully identified as the abstract principle or spirit of gold. The idea was to extract the color and then cleanse the base alloy so that gold would result when the tincture was restored. Allegorically, the procedure was presented as death, putrefaction, and resurrection in higher form.
30. The reference seems to be to the silvery amalgam formed on copper and its alloys by mercury, which quickly tarnishes.

quod omnis res non nisi de eo et cum eo, et quod omnis tinctura non exit nisi de tali qualis est tinctura. Et dixit Andarnah: scitis quare congregaverunt has res super nos et multiplicant earum similitudines, quia ut vos intelligatis quod principium huius rei testificat super suum finem et suus finis testificat super suum principium, et ut sciatis quod hoc totum non est nisi res una, que habet patrem et matrem que creaverunt eam et paverunt, et ipsa res est suus pater et sua mater. Et dixit Euthesia: quo potest species tangi a suo genere? Et dixit Rosinus: verum est quod ex eo exivit et in eum revertetur."

Postea dixit rex Calid: "Iam interrogavi te de eius natura et eius colore. Nunc vero volo te iterum interrogare de tactu et pondere huius lapidis, ac de eius gustu atque illius effectu, i.e., quo naturaliter efficitur."

Ac Morienus ait: "Tactus huius lapidis est tactus mollis, et in eo est multa mollicies, plusquam in suo corpore. Sed eius pondus est multum grave, et eius gustus dulcis, et eius natura est natura aeris."

Dixit ergo Calid: "Fac me scire qualis est eius odor antequam conficiatur et postquam conficiatur."

Dixit Morienus: "Eius odor ante confectionem est multum gravis et fetidus. Et post confectionem, de hoc dixit sapiens quod ista aqua, sc. lac virginis, aufert a corpore mortuo, i.e. terra, odorem in quo iam non est anima, i.e. odorem malum qui assimilatur odori sepulcrorum. Et dixit sapiens quod quicumque fecerit animam, i.e. lac, albam et eam exaltaverit et corpus bene custodierit et auferet ab eo obscuritatem, i.e. nigredinem, et hunc odorem malum ab eo extrahit, tunc dirigetur extinctio anime a corpore. Et in hora coniunctionis, sc. istius anime et istius corporis, maxima mirabilia apparebunt. Et de ista re dixerunt philosophi ad Mariam qui coniuncti fuerunt coram illa: beata es Maria, quia secretum multis celatum et super ornatum tibi revelatum est."

of it and with it does anything result, nor is any tincture to be had except such as is of its type. Again, Andarnah said: now know why others before us have brought together these various parables; it is that you may see that the beginning of this matter attests its end, and its end its beginning, and that you may know that the entire thing is but one matter, having father and mother who made it and bore it, and the matter itself is its own father and its own mother. And Theosebeia asked: how is it possible for a species to deviate from its own kind? Zosimos replied: it is true that it has departed from it, and will revert to it."

Then King Khālid said: "Now having asked you concerning its nature and color, I wish to know further concerning the feel and mass of this stone,[31] as well as its taste and the nature by which it is effected."

Morienus replied: "This stone is of delicate touch, and there is more mildness in its touch than in its substance. In mass it is very weighty, but of a sweet taste, and its proper nature is aerial."

Khālid said: "Tell me of its odor, before and after its confection."

Morienus answered: "Before confectioning, its odor is very heavy and foul. But an authority has said concerning its odor after confectioning that this water, or virgin's milk, removes from a corpse, or earth, in which there is no more spirit, the odor which is foul like that of tombs. Further, an authority said that when the white spirit or milk has been made and raised,[32] and the residual body well prepared, so that its darkness or blackness is removed and that foul odor withdrawn from it, the extraction of the spirit from the body has been accomplished. And at the moment of conjunction of that spirit with that body, great wonders will be seen. *On this point, the philosophers who gathered before Maria said to her: fortunate are you, Maria, for the splendid mystery hidden from many has been revealed to you."

31. A common symbol for the elixir or agent by which transmutation could be performed.

32. I.e., evaporated or sublimed.

Dixit rex Calid: "Expone michi naturas mutatas, i.e., quo id quod est inferius, i.e. terra, sursum ascendat, et quod est superius, i.e. ignis, inferius descendat, et quo unum cum altero coniungitur itaque ad invicem misceantur, et quid est hoc quod faciat commisceri eas, et quo venit aqua, i.e. lac virginis, illa benedicta adequare et mundare de suo odore fetido qui assimilatur odori sepulcrorum in quibus mortui sepeliuntur."

Dixit Morienus: "In re ista dixit Merkovisem ad Sernale:[33] quibus nominibus potest hec res nominari? at ille dixit: uffi et tussi[34] et postea fit eius color bonus et non remanet in eo quicquam obscuritatis nec mali odoris."

Postea dixit rex Calid: "Fac me scire utrum ista res sit multum vilis an multum cara."

Dixit Morienus: Vide quid dixit sapiens, quod hoc magisterium ex una re fieri consuevit. Verte ergo ad hoc tuum sensum, et bene stude in eo, nec habeas quod contradicat de naturis que tibi apparebunt. Et scito quod sulfur et auripigmentum comburuntur, et in combustione diu non durant. Azoc semper diutius in combustione durat, et omnes species que igni appropinquant cito comburuntur. Eo modo ergo expectabis bonum de re que cito in igne comburitur et in carbonem redigitur. Et scito quod numquam ponas in animo tuo quod lapides in hoc opere intrabunt. Sed vide si poteris rem limpidam dirigere sin autem retrahere manum tuam ab ea que sapientes explanaverunt et dixerunt. Si invenitur hoc in sterquilinio quod petis, id accipe. Si vero non inveneris, tolle manum tuam a marsupio tuo, quia omnis res que magno precio emitur in huius operis artificio mendax reperitur. Et iam tibi exposui et feci te scire hoc quod quesivisti. Fac super hoc tibi exponere et serva ne in hoc aliquid expendas, quia completo expendio non indiget. Et in ista re dixit Rosinus: ego commendo tibi, ne in pondere specierum propter hoc opus aliquid expendas, et maxime in opere auri. Et item idem de eodem dixit

33. G: "merkovisem ad sernale oserannale"; P: "markovisem ad seranahteoserantale"; V: "MENTON ad Sanakare"

34. V: "deffi et cussi" and in marg.: "uffi tuffi odor bonus"

King Khālid said: "Explain to me the different natures. How does that which is below, or earth, rise up, and how does that which is above, or fire, descend, and how is one joined with the other so that they then are mixed in turn, and what is it that effects their mixing, and how does that blessed water or virgin's milk come to reduce and cleanse things of that foul odor which is like the odor of tombs in which the dead are buried?"*

Morienus answered: "On this point, Merkovisem said to Sernale:[35] by what names may this matter be called? And he replied: fragrance and incense. After its color is refined, there remains in it nothing of darkness or foul odor."

Then King Khālid said: "Tell me whether this matter is very common or very rare."

Morienus answered: "Now consider what an authority said, that this magistery is customarily accomplished with a single matter. Attend well to this and apply yourself to it, and you will find no contradictions among the natures which you will perceive. Know that sulfur and orpiment[36] burn, but do not long withstand combustion. Quicksilver always long withstands combustion, while all substances which approximate the nature of fire burn quickly. Thus you may expect best results from something which burns quickly in the fire and is reduced to coals. Nor need you ever suppose that the stones[37] will enter into this operation. Try to accomplish purification without deviating from that which the authorities have explained and declared. *If what you seek is found in the dung, take it. But if you do not find it, do not reach for your purse, for anything bought at great price is found to be false in the craft of this operation. Now I have explained to you and given you to know that which you have sought. Follow this and take care not to waste anything on this matter, for no expense is necessary. On this point, Zosimos said: I enjoin you to spend nothing for this operation, particularly for the Golden

35. Perhaps Marqūnas to Safanjā, both legendary Egyptian royalty. See Appendix II, p. 74.

36. Arsenious sulfide, classed with sulfur and mercury as a "spirit" or reagent.

37. The alchemical class of substances including nonreactive, frangible minerals, as distinct from the metals ("bodies") and reactive substances ("spirits").

Rosinus: omnes qui aliud ab hoc lapide ad opus maius petierunt assimilantur viro volenti per scalam sine gradibus ascendere, quod cum nequiverit, super faciem suam protentus decidit."

Et dixit rex: "Hoc quod tu dicis, estne rarum aut de eo multum invenitur?"

Dixit Morienus: "Non est hoc nisi sicut sapiens dixit, ad divitem et pauperem, et ad largum et amarum, et ad ambulantem et sedentem, et hoc in viis pericitur et in sterquiliniis calcatur, et caveant ut extrahatur. Et sepe stulti in sterquiliniis studuerunt ut eum extraherent, et desipuerunt. Et sapientes noverunt quod hec sit res una celata et in ea sunt .iiii. elementa et ipsa est illis fortior."

Dixit Calid rex: "Dic michi locum huius rei et suam mineram, ubi invenitur et ubi queritur cum fuerit necesse."

Obmutuit vero Morienus et oculis in terra defixis diu cogitavit. Et postea caput suum erexit et dixit: "Verum est quod ista res sit ea que magis in te fixa a deo creatur, et ubicumque fueris, semper tecum inseparata manet, et omnis a deo creatus, a quo hec res separatur, morietur."

Dixit rex Calid: "Auge michi super hanc rem istam expositionem."

Dixit Morienus: "Discipuli vero Hircal eum interrogaverunt et dixerunt ei: magister, scito quod sapientes qui ante fuerunt fecerant suis filiis et suis discipulis libros sicut potuerunt, et nos immo te rogamus ut exponas nobis aliquid de hoc opere quod sapientes antiquiores suo sermone multiplicaverunt. Et respondit Hircal et dixit: o filii sapientie, scitote quod creator altissimus benedictus creavit mundum ex .iiii. elementis dissimilibus, et posuit hominem inter illa magis ornatum."

Et dixit rex Calid: "Moriene, adhuc adiunge michi super hanc explanationem."

Dixit Morienus: "Quid tibi multa referam? Hec enim res ex te extrahitur et tu illius minera existis et apud te illam inveniunt et vere ex te excipiunt, et post eius probationem augebitur eius amor in te. Intende hoc et scies hoc verum esse."

Dixit rex Calid: "Novisti alium lapidem qui huic lapidi assimilatur et cuius potentia hoc idem possit perfici?"

Work.* And again he said: whoever has required other than this stone for the Major Work is like a man attempting to climb a stair that has no steps, for he cannot, and falls flat on his face."

*The king asked: "Is this thing of which you speak rare, or commonly found?"

Morienus answered: "As an authority has said, it is there for both rich and poor, for the generous and the greedy, for him who runs and him who sits. It is cast in the streets and trampled in the dung, but let none take pains to extract it. Fools have often wasted much zeal on the dung in hopes of extracting it, but they have acted in ignorance.* The wise know that this unique thing is hidden and that it is what contains the four elements within itself, having power over them."

King Khālid said: "Tell me where the sources of this thing are, whence it may be gathered as there is need of it."

But Morienus fell silent and, casting his gaze downward, reflected deeply for some time. *Then he raised his head and spoke: "Truly, this matter is that created by God which is firmly captive within you yourself, inseparable from you, wherever you be, and any creature of God deprived of it will die."*

King Khālid said: "Give me further explanation in this matter."

Morienus continued: "The disciples of Herakleios inquired of him, saying: Master, the wise men of old handed on their power to their sons and disciples through books. Now we earnestly request that you set forth to us something of that operation concerning which the ancient seers spoke so variously. And Herakleios responded and said: O sons of knowledge, know that the blessed creator most high created the world out of the four dissimilar elements, establishing man as most splendid in their midst."

But King Khālid said: "O Morienus, explain this still further to me."

Morienus said: "What more can I tell you? For this matter comes from you, who are yourself its source, where it is found and whence it is taken, and when you see this, your zeal for it will increase. Consider this, and you will find that it is true."

King Khālid said: "Is any other stone like this one known to you, by the power of which the same may be accomplished?"

Dixit Morienus: "Non novi alium lapidem qui ei assimiletur neque qui eius habet effectum. Quia in hoc lapide sunt .iiii. elementa, et mundo assimilatur et mundi compositioni. Nec reperitur in mundo lapis alius qui huic assimiletur in effectu sive in natura, nec aliquis sapiens umquam opus operatus est nisi cum eo.[38] Et si aliqui quererent alium ad hoc opus, sua compositio omnino falleretur, nec sequeretur effectum."

Et tunc dixit Morienus: "Primum quod michi restat tibi dicendum est principium huius facundie, et ego aufero te ab errore. Vide igitur ne a radice exeas ne aliam queras eius mutationem. Quia non invenies proficuum nec bonum tibi quesitum nisi de eo. Quare de eo nichil minuas nec aliquid aliud cum eo misceas, quia non est necesse. Et iterum moneo te ut hoc quod modo diximus bene observes."

Postea rex Calid: "O Moriene, nomina michi qualitatem operationis huius operis, cum dei auxilio."

Dixit Morienus: "Ego nominabo eam tibi secundum quod sapientes nominaverunt."

Dixit rex Calid: "Iam bene dixisti."

Dixit ergo Morienus: "Necesse est tibi in directione huius operationis desponsatio, pullulatio, pregnatio et ortus atque nutrimentum. Cum ergo fit coniunctio, sequitur conceptio, et conceptione iniatur pregnatio, et pregnationem subsequitur ortus. Et directio huius compositionis creationi hominis assimilatur. Nam creator altissimus magnus creavit hominem non secundum domus edificationem, nec qui domus edificationi vel alicui facto assimilatur quod fiat ab homine cum manibus, quia domus edificatio constat ex re super rem posita. Homo vero ex re non est factus, quia homo antequam finiatur de re ad rem que ea est melior mutatur, et fit homo creatura. Post creaturam, et ipse fit de die in diem et de mense in mensem, donec creator altissimus magnam suam compleat creaturam in tempore certo et in diebus maturitatis. Et sic creator in primis creavit .iiii. elementa in spermate, tum posuit eis certum terminum in quo compleantur et post hoc finiantur cum sua patientia et fortitudine. Et hoc opus nichil est nisi secretum secretorum dei altissimi magni, quod ipse prophetis suis ostendit, quorum deus animas in paradiso suo

38. G: "cum eo, sc. sanguine"

Morienus replied: "I know no other stone like it nor having its powers. While the four elements are contained in this stone, it being thus like the world in composition, yet no other stone like it in power or nature is found in the world, nor has any of the authorities ever performed the operation other than by means of it. And the compositions attempted by those using anything else in this operation fail utterly and come to nothing."

Then Morienus continued: "To guard you from error, I tell you again what I said at the beginning. Take care neither to depart from the root, nor seek any other form of it, for you will attain the profit and the reward you pursue only by means of this. There is no need for you to reduce it or to mix anything else with it. Again I admonish you to heed well that which we have said so far."

King Khālid said: "O Morienus, tell me the manner of conducting this operation, with God's aid."

Morienus replied: "I will tell you, according to the terms the authorities have used."

"Very well," said King Khālid.

Then Morienus said: "For the conduct of this operation, you must have pairing, production of offspring, pregnancy, birth, and rearing. For union is followed by conception, which initiates pregnancy, whereupon birth follows. Now the performance of this composition is likened to the generation of man, whom the great Creator most high made not after the manner in which a house is constructed nor as anything else which is built by the hand of man. For a house is built by setting one object upon another, but man is not made of objects. His substance, rather, before he is formed, improves through successive changes until the living being is made, which then continues from day to day and from month to month, so that the creator most high at last finishes this his great handiwork at the appointed time of maturity. So also did the creator first make the seed of the four elements, and set for them a certain time in which they should be formed, after which they might be finished as he would suffer and ordain it. And this operation is but the secret of secrets of great God most high, which he reveals to his prophets, whose souls he has gathered to himself in paradise. And except that the authori-

collocavit. Et si non foret qui sapientes assimilarentur ad hoc quod fecerunt [39]prophete de modo vasis in quo compositur, nec alii ante eos hoc viderunt nec sciverunt[39] quo erat usquedum illi eis hoc exposuerunt, numquam alii aliquid potuissent. Scito ergo hoc."

Et adhuc Morienus subiunxit: "Iam tibi ostendi quod hoc opus non multum distat ab omni creatura, nec fuit umquam aliquid natum nec animatum nec crescens nisi post putredinem et visus mutationem. Hoc ergo modo sapiens dixit quod fortitudo huius operis non est nisi post putredinem. [40]Et adhuc dixit sapiens si putridum non fuerit, fundi non poterit nec solvetur. Et si solutum non fuerit, ad nichilum redigetur."

Dixit rex Calid: "Quid est post putredinem?"[40]

Dixit Morienus: "Factum est quo perficit creator altissimus magnus compositionem quesitam. Et scito quod hoc opus indiget binis factis atque binis compositionibus, et cum unum perficitur, aliud incipitur. Cum aliud perficitur, totum opus terminatur."

Dixit ergo rex Calid: "Quomodo indiget binis factis atque binis compositionibus, cum tu ante dixisses quod hoc totum erat unum, et eius via una?"

Dixit Morienus: "Verum est quod hoc unum est, et eius via una, quia eius una compositio. Talis est qualis et altera."

Dixit ergo rex Calid: "Et est compositio cum qua dixisti quod totum opus finiretur?"

Dixit Morienus: "O rex, deus ad bonum te convertat. Hec autem compositio non efficitur manibus. Sed hec compositio est, de cuius gravitate quamplurimi sapientes sunt conquesti, qui dixerunt: si quis hanc compositionem per suam scientiam invenerit, hoc totum opus facile scire poterit. Et qui hanc compositionem reperire nequiverit, totum opus ei latebit."

Dixit ergo rex Calid: "Quenam est hec mirabilis compositio?"

39. P omits "prophete . . . sciverunt"
40. P omits "Et . . . putredinem"

ties have been, as it were, the vessel in which the prophets performed the composition of this matter, others would never have been able to do so, for none before the authorities had ever seen it nor known whence it was, until the prophets revealed it to them. Of this you may be sure."

Morienus continued: "Now I have shown you that this operation is at no great remove from the living things, nor was anything ever born or endowed with spirit or growth except after putrefaction and change of appearance. Thus it is that an authority has said that this operation avails nothing until after decay. And again he said that this matter must putrefy before it can be poured or made fluid, without which nothing will be attained."

King Khālid asked: "What is it after putrefaction?"

Morienus replied: "It is then made that by which the great creator most high completes the required composition. And know that this operation must be done twice, and two compositions must be completed, one after the other, and when the second has been completed, the whole operation is ended."

Whereupon King Khālid asked: "But how is it that it must be done twice, with two compositions? Did you not say before that this was all but one matter, having but one path?"

Morienus answered: "It is true that this is but one matter, having a single path, for its composition is the same. The one is just like the other."

And King Khālid asked: "Now, is this the composition by which you said the entire work was finished?"

Morienus replied: "O king, may God enrich you. Indeed, this composition is not the work of the hand. This one is crucial, as so many authorities have had cause to lament, for they have declared that one who by means of his knowledge discovers this composition will easily understand the entire operation, which, however, will remain concealed from one who does not."

Then King Khālid asked: "But what is this marvelous composition?"

Dixit Morienus: "Est sicuti sapientes dixerunt naturarum mutatio, et earum et calidum cum frigido, i.e. ignis cum aqua, et humidum cum sicco, i.e. aer cum terra, admirabilis commixtio, cum compositione subtili."

Dixit rex Calid: "O Moriene, cum qua re fit hec compositio, cum sine manu perfici possit?"

Dixit Morienus: "Est secundum quod sapientes dixerunt, quod azoc, i.e. argentum vivum, et ignis, sc. lapidis, latonem, i.e. terram, abluunt atque mundant et obscuritatem ab eo auferunt. Et sic sapiens dixit, si bene mensuram ignis prepaveris, azoc et ignis in hac compositione tibi sufficient, si deus voluerit. Et sicut dixit Esbo interfector, ad albandum latonem et libros interpretandum ne corda nostra corrumpantur."[41]

Dixit rex Calid: "O Moriene, precedet ne compositio putredinem?"

Dixit Morienus: Compositio putredinem precedit, sed talis compositio compositio non est."

Et dixit rex Calid: "Quid hec est ergo?"

Dixit Morienus: "Est extractio aque a terra et eius super eam dimissio donec terra putrescat. Et cum aqua putrescit et mundatur, et cum mundata fuerit, iam totum opus dirigitur, cum adiutorio dei altissimi et magni. Et tunc pervenies ad hoc quod desiderasti, et ipsa est compositio hominum sapientum, quia ipsa sit parts tertia totius operis.[42] Et scito quod si corpus immundum, i.e. terram, non mundaveris usquedum mundetur et siccetur et dealbetur et in eum animam, i.e. ignem, mittas usquedum in eum tinctura intret, i.e. decidat, eo iam mundato atque bono, in quo nec sit immunditia nec fetor, nichil de tuo opere direxisti. Et scito quod anima cito vadit in suo corpore. Et quamvis velis animan coniungere corpori alieno, minime eam coniungere quieris."

Dixit rex Calid: "Creator erit michi meum adiutorium. Et nomina michi secundam compositionem, et dic michi si hec compositio sit finis compositionis prime."

41. G: "de albandi latonem"; P: "esbon . . . et libros e't ptone et corda"; V: "LELBO interfector de albate latonem et libros rumpite ne corda vestra rumpantur"

42. At this point, M switches to the revised text.

And Morienus answered: "The authorities likened it to an alternation of natures, a wondrous mingling of heat with cold, i.e., of fire with water, and wetness with dryness, i.e., of air with earth, in exact proportions."

King Khālid said: "O Morienus, since the hand does not perform this composition, how is it done?"

Morienus answered: "According to the authorities, quicksilver and fire (of the stone) wash latten, or earth, and cleanse it of darkness. One of the authorities said that if you have the right degree of fire, quicksilver and fire are all you will need in this composition, God willing. But as Esbo the Slayer[43] said, let not our hearts be corrupted for whitening latten and interpreting books."

*King Khālid then asked: "O Morienus, does a composition not precede putrefaction?"

Morienus replied: "A composition does precede putrefaction, but this is not a true composition."

"What is it then?" asked Khālid.

Morienus said: "It consists in extracting the water from earth and dispersing it, so that the earth begins to putrefy. When it has thus putrefied and been cleansed, the whole operation is done, with the aid of great God most high.* Then you will attain that which you have sought, which is the composition of the seers, being a third part of the whole operation. And know that you have accomplished nothing of your operation until you have cleansed, dried and whitened the impure body, or earth, and so infused it with spirit, or fire, that the tincture descends into it and enters it after it is so cleansed and improved, there being no further impurity or foulness in it. For the spirit quickly enters its proper body, but you will not be able to join it with any other body, try as you will."

"May the Creator come to my aid," said the king. *"Now declare to me the second composition, and tell me whether it be the completion of the first."

43. A badly garbled name has here been turned into an allegory of the need to first "slay" the corrupt matter before restoring it.

Dixit Morienus: "Ita est. Cum si direxeris corpus illud, i.e. terram, sicut iam diximus, mitte postea in eo de fermento, sc. lac, quartam partem. Et fermentum auri est sicut fermentum panis. Et pone eum coqui in sole, i.e. fimo, donec una res fiat et unum corpus siccum. Et tunc incipe cum dei benedictione ablutum. Et hoc est ut accipias unam partem de re mortifera, et per tres dies coquas. Et vide ne de suis diebus aliquem minuas ne eos obliviscaris, et cave ne eius ignis extinguatur nec invalescat, sed sit ignis mitis, et hoc similiter ne obliviscaris, quia si obliviscaris, tua caldaria cum omnibus que in ea sunt destruentur. Et maximum sequetur dampnum. Postea vero post .xvii. noctes transierunt, vade ad tuam caldariam et eam discooperi et extrahe suam aquam et aliam aquam ei impone, et facias ita tribus vicibus, et ipsa caldaria semper sit in sua fornace que sibi conveniat, donec ipsius fermentatio auri compleatur et donec ad medietatem quarte sue cocture redigatur. Et cum .xx. noctes perficientur, extrahe eum et sicca eum, et hoc arabice nominatur acir.[44] Et postea sume corpus ablutum et preparatum et pone eum super tuam fornacem et riga eum coctidie cum quarta rei mortificate quam tecum habebis, et cave ne flamma ignis ad caldariam applicetur cum caldaria dampnabitur. Postea mitte caldariam in fornace magna et accende post hec omnia ignem super suum capud per .ii. dies et per .ii. noctes, nec etiam una hora ignis minuatur. Postea vero depone caldariam ab ignem et lauda creatorem super hoc quod tibi contulit."

Dixit rex Calid: "Sic faciam ego. Sit deus benedictus in secula seculorum, amen."

Dixit Morienus: "Adhuc augebo tibi super hoc explanationem. Totum bonum non est nisi in venatione corporum coniunctorum et concordantium, que funduntur et ad invicem reperiuntur et que se mundant ac dirigunt ut plane appareant super fortitudinem ignis, et cum quesitores sapientie sciverunt eorum detentionem atque venationem et suam solutionem atque compositionem et eorum erectionem et eorum decoctionem et eorum naturam et eorum ignem et edificationem suorum fornacium et suorum

44. V: "ixir"; Ar. *al-iksīr* "elixir"

Morienus answered: "It is indeed. When you have treated the body, or earth, in the way we have described, put into it a fourth part of the ferment, or milk. For the fermentation of gold is like that of bread. Then put it in the sun, or in dung, to be warmed, so that it is made one substance and body, and dried. Then bless God and begin the washing. Take one part of the mortifying substance and cook it for three days, being careful not to lengthen or shorten the time, and do not let the fire, which should be gentle, go out or burn too low. If you neglect this, your pot and everything in it will be ruined, much to your loss. Then wait seventeen days, after which return to your pot and open it. Change the liquid in it, replacing it with fresh, and do all this three times, using the same pot and keeping it always in a suitable furnace, until the fermentation of this gold is finished and this fourth of the brew is reduced by half. After twenty days, take it out and dry it; in Arabic, it is called the "elixir." Then put the washed and prepared body upon your furnace, and moisten it daily with a fourth part of the mortified matter which remains, taking care that the flame of the fire does not touch the pot, which will be destroyed if it does. Finally, place the pot in a large furnace and start a fire on top of it, keeping it up without diminution for two days and nights. Then take the pot from the fire and praise the creator for that which he has given you."*

King Khālid said: "I will do so, and may God be ever praised, amen."

Morienus continued: "Now I will explain further to you about this, the whole good of which consists in seeking the joining and concordance of bodies which are shattered and then brought together again and which are so purified and treated as to appear distinctly by the power of fire. Those who seek after the knowledge of these bodies must understand their pursuit and capture, their dissolution and composition, how to build them up and boil them down, must know their natures and heats, and how to build

ignium accensionem, i.e., in quibus locis fornacium ignis accendi debeat, et numerum suorum dierum. Iam applicui ad sapientiam completam cum voluntate creatoris altissimi et magni. Et radix huius sapientie in hora sue compositionis est, quod hec tractatur cum sensu et providentia et quod omnis festinatio procul pellatur et quod caveant se ab errore et quod expectent super fixurum die ac nocte. Sed hoc quod aptat hoc corpus est sanguis, i.e. lac virginis, et ille unificat atque coniungit et ex illis omnibus perficit unum corpus, et propter hoc necesse est blande ignem diutius apponere eis qui diu duret equalis, qui non minuatur nec augmentatur. Sed eudica[45] est quit ruat corpora que in terram mutasti ne comburantur, quia si cito comburerentur, suas animas iam non retinerent. Et eudica bene convenit omnibus corporibus, quia ea vivificat et aptat, nec ea confundit, et mutat quedam illorum in aliis, et prohibet calorem ignis. Et cum eudicam querere volueris, quere eum in mineris vitri, et cum eum inveneris, cave ne aliquid cum eo facias, eo animo existente, quoniam tuum opus confunderes. Sed cum eum inveneris, reconde eum. Sed terra fetida cito recipit albas scintillas, et vetat sanguinem, i.e. aerem vel lac virginis, ne in decoctione dampnetur. Quia dominium sanguinis multum est, quare sanguis frangendus est ne impediat, et perficiat, et hec sanguinis fractio fiat postquam dealbatum fuerit hoc quod remansit in nigredinem colorum minerarum iam fusarum, et omnem fructum huius magisterii, in cuius initio eius veritatem non videris, perficiens. Et istud est secretum operis tui et suum capitulum quod tibi in unum coniunxi atque exposui. Quod videlicet una pars eius super .m. partes argenti posita totum illud argentum in aurum bonum et rubeum conficit, si deus voluerit. Ne queras igitur post rem istam aliam ab ea diversam. Et deus te ad bonum convertat, et omnem hominem qui hanc adeptus est scientiam. Radix sue adeptionis non aliud est nisi donum dei altissimi et magni, qui eam attribuit suis servis."

45. G: "endhikias"; P: "eudihkan i.e. aer"

furnaces for them and light the fires at the right places therein, and must know the right number of days for each. For I have attained to the full knowledge of these things by the will of the great Creator most high. And the very root of this knowledge is to act with care and perception at the time of composition, avoiding all haste and error, and watching patiently day and night for fixation. But that which prepares this body is blood, or virgin's milk, for it unites and joins all the various substances and properties into one body, it being only necessary to apply to them a gentle heat that long continues at the same degree, neither increasing nor decreasing. But the substance eudica[46] should be used to agitate the bodies you have converted to earth so that they are not burned, for if they were quickly consumed, they would not long contain their spirits. Eudica consists well with all bodies, enlivening and preparing them without confusing them, but converting certain of them into others and resisting the heat of the fire. If you wish to obtain eudica, look for it in vitreous minerals.[47] But, having found it, you must take care not to use it if its spirit has escaped, for you would spoil your operation. Therefore preserve it when you find it. Now the foul earth readily receives the white sparks and prevents destruction of the blood, or air, or virgin's milk, during decoction. But such is the blood's strength that it must be broken in order to promote rather than impede, and this is done after whatever remaining still dark of the confused minerals has been whitened, thus accomplishing the full fruit of this magistery, the truth of which you may well not at first have seen. That is in sum the secret of your operation, as I have condensed it and set it forth for you.[48] For surely, one part of this matter placed upon a thousand parts of silver converts it all into fine, red gold, God willing. Therefore, seek nothing else beyond this matter. And may God enrich you, and all the adepts of this knowledge. But the root of its possession is only the gift of great God most high, who has awarded it to his servants."

46. Identified later (p. 44) as a kind of glaze.

47. Or "in glass mines."

48. The operation is more fully described and even demonstrated in the following section.

Post hec igitur incepit Morienus species nominare et dixit: "O rex, deus te ad bonum convertat. Et tu totus michi mente sis ut audias et intelligas ea que tibi ad modum dicturus sum."

Dixit rex Calid: "O Moriene, nomina michi quod volueris."

Dixit Morienus: "Fumus rubeus et fumus citrinus et fumus albus et leo viridis et almagra[49] et immunditia mortui et lapidum et sanguis et eudica et terra fetida sunt ista in quibus tota huius operis consistit efficacia."

Dixit rex Calid: "Explana michi nomina."

Dixit Morienus: "In antea tibi explanabo et coram te ea quorum hec sunt nomina adducam, ita ut ea videas, et coram te in illis operabor. Et .x. isti sunt fratres, et cum volueris eos venari atque dispensare et dissolvere et dirigere et coniungere et conficere secundum modum maxime quem ego coram te operatus fuero, et tu similiter in eo operare, quia hec est radix huius scientie atque operis, quam multum homines querent et in mineris de omni humido et sicco et de ceteris. Fac ergo sicut videns, quia non est insipiens sicut sapiens, nec cecus sicut videns. Nec auferas te ab hoc quod tibi exposui et quod te videre feci, quoniam errabis, quia obstaculum sciencie magnum est. Nec iste qui compositionem huius operis iam viderit est veluti ille qui adhuc in eius inquisitionem per libros perseverat, quia libri sunt qui deviant inquisitores huius sciencie. Et pars maior librorum est obscura et si male connexa, ne eos intelligant nisi qui eos composuerunt. Et omnis qui hanc scientiam multum quesiverit et amaverit bene agit, quia per istam intrabit ad aliam quam nondum cognoverat."

Dixit rex Calid: "Verum est quod tu dicis, et veritas ipsa florescit et lucescit cum tu eam explanas."

Dixit Morienus: "Ista est aptatio corporis mundandi, i.e. terre, donec indurescas eam, sc. terram, quam dura et sicca, sc. naturaliter, et albam facias, sc. per purgationem et ablutionem, et in

49. P: "amaligra"; Ar. *al-maghra* "red ocher"

Thereupon Morienus began to enumerate the various substances, saying: "O king, may God enrich you. Attend fully to me, that you may hear and understand all that I am going to say to you."

And King Khālid said: "O Morienus, tell me what you would have me know."[50]

Morienus spoke: "The things in which the entire accomplishment of this operation consists are the red vapor, the yellow vapor, the white vapor, the green lion, ocher, the impurities of the dead and of the stones, blood, eudica, and foul earth."

King Khālid said: "Explain these terms to me."

Morienus replied: "Before I explain them to you, I will both bring before you the things called by these names, that you may see them, as well as work with them in your presence. These ten are of the same family, and if you wish to seek, distribute, and dissolve them, and stiffen, join, and confect them exactly as I am about to do before you, you have but to do likewise, for this is the root of this knowledge and operation, which many look for in all sorts of minerals, wet and dry. But do you as one who sees, for the ignorant is not as the wise, nor the blind as the sighted. Do not depart from that which I have set forth for you and shown you, for you will go astray. There are great hindrances to knowledge. But one who has seen this operation performed is not as one who has sought for it only through books, for there are books which mislead those in quest of this knowledge. And the greater part of those books are so obscure and disorganized that only those who wrote them can understand them. But he who is eager for this knowledge and pursues it does well, for by means of it he will gain access to strange things he had never known before."

King Khālid said: "The truth of what you say blossoms and shines in your explanation."

Morienus continued: "In preparation of the body, or earth, for purification, you make it very hard and dry in nature, and then whiten it by purging and washing, and invest it with the spirit,

50. Khālid's versifications on the following recipe are quoted by Abu'l-Qāsim. See Commentary, below, pp. 60–61.

eam animam mittas, sc. lac virginis, antequam elixir[51] super eam ponatur, quia elixir non recipitur nisi a corpore mundo et bono, nec fetido, ut eius tinctura formosa appareat cum elixir super eam transiverit. Et hec compositio est compositio sapientum et est prima compositio. Incipe ergo in nomine creatoris et eius auxilio cum venatione fumi albi, sc. lactis, quia fumus rubeus, sc. ignis mundus, capit album a fumo albo.[52] Et funde eos et circumiunge, et de unoquoque eorum equale pondus ponatur. Et postea commisceatur. Et postea in vase spisso, quod fere unam libram possit recipere, ponatur, et applica eos applicatione aptissima, quia in eis venti habentur, qui si infra vas non fuerunt retenti, evadent. Et postea assume vas predictum et eius os bene cum luto sapientie obtura, et in luto parum salis appone unde magis confirmetur et fortitudini ignis resistat. Postea vero fornax calefiat cum stercore ovino vel cum foliis olivarum et postea vas predictum cum illis que in ipso sunt in fornace sublimetur. Et hec sublimatio post solis occasum fiat, et ibi dimittatur donec dies refrigescat. Et tunc extrahatur hoc, ita secundum vas discooperiatur et frangatur, et quod intus fuerit aspice, quod si ad modum lapidis in unum bene coniunctum videris, tere eum bene. Postea tantarisa et accipe aliud vas, et vide cuius fundus sit rotundus. Et in eo illud pone, et postea construe sibi fornacem philosophorum in quo ignis philosophorum accendatur,[53] qui spatio .xx4. dierum non extinguatur. Transactis itaque hiis diebus, vas a fornace extrahas, et quod intus inveneris, desiccabis. Postea accipe de eo unam partem, et eam cum .4. partibus mundati coniunge, et postea in unam partem immundi. Et secundum hunc numerum unum eorum alteri ponatur usquedum hec omnia in unum misceantur, quibus in unum commixtis fiat ex eo elixir. Postea aspice eius interiora, et si videris album in eo remansum et fixum et calcinatum, nec propter ignis fortitudinem secessum, i.e. cum multum

51. G: "alekar"; P: "adlehkal .s. ignis"

52. All mss.: "rubeo"

53. V: "Ignis philosophicus talis est qui eius materia vel ex stercore sit composita aut ex foliis olivarum. Nichil enim aliud est quod ignem in combustione equalem faciat perdurare ut stercus ovinum vel folia olivarum, qui per spacium .xxi. dierum non extinguatur."

aid the quest for the white or milky vapor, for the red or fiery or virgin's milk, before the elixir is put onto it, for the elixir is absorbed only by a fine and pure body having no foulness in such a way that it is beautifully tinted after the elixir has passed through it. This is the composition of the authorities, and is the first composition. Then begin in the creator's name and with his vapor takes the whiteness from the white vapor. Now pour out these things and set them about, taking an equal weight of each. Then they are mixed together. Pack the mixture in a vessel that will just hold the full charge. This is the best way to handle these things, for they contain vapors which escape unless sealed in a container. Now stop the mouth of this vessel well with the luting cement which the authorities use, adding a little salt to it to make it stronger, that it may better withstand the heat of the fire. Let the furnace be heated with sheep dung or olive leaves and the vessel with its contents put into it to sublime. The sublimation should be done after sunset and the vessel allowed to stand until the cool of the evening. Then unstop the vessel and shatter it, examining that which is thus extracted, and if you find it well consolidated, like a stone, grind it thoroughly. Sift it and put it into another vessel, the bottom of which is rounded. Construct for it a philosopher's furnace and let a philosopher's fire be started in it and kept going for a space of twenty-four days.[54] After this time, you should withdraw the vessel from the furnace and dry that which you find in it. Join one part of this with four parts of the purified earth and then with one part of the unpurified, proceeding in this order one after the other until all are mixed together, from which the elixir then may be made. Then examine its interior, and if you find the whiteness retained, well fixed and calcined, not driven off by the heat of the fire even after much heating, you have accomplished both natures of this

54. V: "The philosophical fire is a fire for which the fuel consists either of dung or olive leaves. Nothing else can so long sustain the fire so evenly as sheep dung or olive leaves."

fuerit combustum, iam duas naturas huius operis perfecisti. Et scias si totum tuum regnum dedisses et omnes tuos homines insimul coniunxisses qui mississent album in mundum, propter hunc modum non potuissent. Quia anima cito in suo corpore intrat; quam si in alieno corpore mittere studueris, incassum laborabis. Et veritas est magis lucida."

Dixit rex Calid: "Verum dixisti, sicut ego vidi, et deus animas suorum philosophorum in manus suas recipiat.[55]

Incipit compositio secunda ex verbis Morieni Romani que habuit cum Calid rege filio Iezid filii Macoia.[56] Dixit Morienus: "Sume fumum album, i.e. lac virginis, et leonem viridem, i.e. ignem, et almagram rubeam, i.e. ignem, et immunditiam mortui, i.e. terram, et solve ea et fac ea ascendere et coniungere, et in unaquaque parte leonis viridis mitte tres partes immunditie mortui. Et fac de albo fumo unam partem et de almagra partes duas, et pone hec in vase viridi, ut in eo coquatur, cuius os cum luto bene claude. Postea in sole illud pone donec desiccetur, et cum desiccatum fuerit, pone in eo elixir. Et postea super eum aquam sanguinis pone tantam usque super eum natet. Et post tres noctes, riga eum cum aqua fetida. Et cave de suis diebus aliquid minuas, nec eos obliviscaris aut suus ignis extinguatur, quia sic necesse est, et similiter cave ne suus ignis sit multum calidus, quia olla tua dampnabitur et quicquid est in ea. Et postea .xvii. noctibus transactis, vade ad ollam tuam et aperi eam et aquam quam inveneris intus extrahe, et iterum aquam fetidam in eam impone, et sic facies per tres noctes, olla super fornacem manente. Post vero .xx. noctes, extrahe eam a fornace et elixir quod intus habetur desicca. Postea sume corpus ablutum bonum in quo vides album mundum fixum, et pone eum in olla parvissima que sic in quantitate fornacis magni quem construxisti fiat. Et applica eum fornaci applicatione fortissima, et cave ne ei aliquis applicet flamma, cum olla dampnaretur. Et hoc quod de

55. P: "amen"
56. G: "a rege ollia filio iezid filii mooia"

operation. But know that if you had given your entire kingdom and brought all your subjects together at once to project the whiteness into the purified matter, they would have been powerless to do so by such means. For the spirit readily enters its own body, but if you try to put it into some foreign body, you will waste your efforts. This truth is perfectly clear."

"You have spoken truly, as I have witnessed," said King Khālid, "and may God receive the souls of his philosophers into his keeping."

Here is another composition from the dialogues of Morienus the Greek with King Khālid ibn Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyya.[57] Morienus said: "Take the white vapor, or virgin's milk, and the green lion,[58] or fire, and red ocher, or fire, and the impurity of the dead, or earth; dissolve them and cause them to ascend and unite, using for each part of the green lion three parts of the impurity. Then put one part of the white vapor and two parts of the ocher in a green vessel to be boiled, stopping its mouth well with cement. Put this in the sun until it dries, and then put the elixir into it. Pour enough of the sanguine water over it to cover it, and after three days, moisten it with the foul water. But take care neither to cut short nor extend the time, nor let the fire go out, for it must be done just so. Likewise, see that the fire is not too hot, for your jar will be destroyed and everything in it also. Wait seventeen days, then go to your jar, open it and take out the water you will find in it, replacing it with foul water, keeping the jar on the furnace. After twenty days, take it from the furnace and dry the elixir which it contains. Then take the well-washed body in which you find the whiteness pure and fixed and put it in as small a jar as will contain it and will just fit the furnace which you have made to take it. Heat it strongly in the furnace, but do not let the flame touch it, for that would destroy it. Then take such a quantity of the elixir as to form eleven parts for every ten parts of the white body. Mix these, and for every

57. A slightly improved version of the preceding recipe, now with a pinch of "eudica."
58. Any dilute acid that would "devour" metals, typically forming green copper salts.

elixir in eam proieceris ita proiciatur, ut si de corpore albo .x. proiecte fuerint partes, de elixir .xi. partes proiciantur. Hiis itaque commixtis, proicie super unamquemque huius commixtionis unciam quartam partem unius dragmatis de eudica. Et postea ollam in magna fornace ponas et per duos dies et noctes ignem super capud olle accende, itaque in aliqua hora horum dierum et noctuum ignis non extinguatur. Hiis ergo diebus et noctibus peractis, extrahe quod in olla inveneris et lauda creatorem altissimum et magnum super hoc quod tibi attribuit."

Incipit expositio specierum secundum dicta Morieni. Dixit Morienus quod corpus immundum apud philosophos dicitur plumbum, i.e. terra, quod interpretatur ascop.[59] Corpus vero mundum est stannum, quod interpretatur aborec.[60] Leo viridis est vitrum et almagra est laton, quamvis in precedentibus terra rubea nominetur. Et sanguis est auripigmentum, et terra fetida est sulfur fetidum. Eudica est omnium horum secretum, quod nominatur morhuma,[61] i.e. feces vitri, licet eius immunditia. Fumus rubeus est auripigmentum rubeum, et fumus albus est argentum vivum, et fumus citrinus est sulfur citrinum. Hic est modus fumi albi et leonis viridis et aque fetide. "Cela ergo hec tria. Sive homines querere hoc opus circa omnia alia, quam in omnibus errabunt donec sol, i.e. ignis, et terra et luna in uno corpore redigantur, quod numquam eveniet nisi cum deus voluerit. Sed hoc quod iam me interrogasti, cum dixisti, quid est hoc quod homines putabant fore huius operis secretum magisterii, et cum quo putabant quod suum opus dirigetur: quidam eorum putabant quod foret terra aut lapis aut ovum aut sanguis aut urina aut acetum. Et triverunt et assaverunt et extraxerunt et sepelierunt hec omnia, et secundum suum arbitrium fecerunt ut eorum error confortaretur, et ut confidenter invenirent quod querebant. Et scias quod terra et lapis et omnia que nominavi, in quibus confidunt homines, sunt mendacium et malum habentia

59. P: "ascorpio"; V: "asrop"; Ar. *usrub* "lead"

60. P: "stagnum i.e. aeris . . . alveht"; "stagnum . . . arenec"; Greek *arrenikon* "arsenic"

61. P: "mezhūma"; V: "mosachimea"; Ar. *mashaqūniyya* "glaze"

ounce of this mixture, add one-fourth of a dram of eudica. Then put the jar in a large furnace and build a fire over it, keeping it going for two days without being extinguished at any hour of the day or night. When this is done, take out what you find in the jar and praise the great Creator most high for what he has given you."

Now here is an explanation of the various substances according to Morienus, who said that the philosophers referred to the impure body as lead. The purified body is tin. The green lion is glass[62] and almagra is latten, although it may have been called red earth earlier. And blood is orpiment, and foul earth is foul sulfur. Eudica is apart from all these and is called glaze, or the dregs or impurity of glass. The red vapor is red orpiment, the white vapor quicksilver and the yellow vapor yellow sulfur. This is the nature of the white vapor, the green lion, and the foul water.

"Therefore," said Morienus, "keep these three to yourself. For though men seek this operation among all others, they will go utterly astray until sun, or fire, is compounded in a single body with earth and moon, which will not occur until God wills. But you asked me what it is that men think to be the secret of this operation of the magistery and with what they suppose the operation to be accomplished. Some thought it to be earth, or a stone, or an egg, or blood, urine, or vinegar. And they ground and assayed and extracted and dug around after all these things as their fancy took them, but erring the more, the more confident they were of finding what they sought. Now you should know that earth and stone and all those things I have named, in which

62. i.e., green vitriol, crystalline sulfates formed by treating alloys with acid, the devouring "green lion."

exitum sine proficuo. Et tota huius operis efficacia constat in suo igne, qui cum eo aptant mineras et cum eo retinent malas animas, et cum eo anima cum corpore coniungitur. Et ignis est tota huius rei vera probatio. Et omnis res huius magisterii, in cuius principio veritas non apparet, caret proficuo, quo sperabis quod eveniat tibi de ea hoc quod volueris, cum illa non saliet nec se cum immundo misceat ita ut unum corpus efficiatur. Quod quando fiet sicut dixi tibi, tunc invenies quod quesivisti, si deus voluerit. Scito ergo hoc bene et intellige et compone, et scito eius compositionem et in ea multum stude, quia studium multum viam eius rectam tibi ostendet ita ut eam videas. Nec poterit a te amplius celari. Et radix maior est ut scias bene mineras meliores ad hoc, ne totum opus destruatur. Sed quod de fumo albo, i.e. lacte virginis, interrogasti, scias quod illa est tinctura et anima horum corporum iam solutorum et mortuorum, quorum iam animas extraxerunt. Et iterum animas suas sibi reddiderunt. Et omne corpus quod anima caruerit tenebrosum est. Et fumus albus est quod fluit in corpore et aufert eius nigredinem, i.e. terre, atque immunditiam, et quod corpora in unum consolidat et eorum aquam multiplicat. Quod immundum nigrum est leve, et cum sua aufertur nigredo, confortabitur et multiplicabitur sicut aqua, et pulchritudo apparebit sua, et tinctura comparabitur in eo. Et bene hoc scias et intelligas, et scito quod[63] cum hoc tu feceris tinctura in eo, bene operabitur et veniet suum aurum rubeum atque peroptimum, quo nichil melius nec magis purum invenietur. Et ob hanc causam aurum romanum solet appellari. Et si fumus albus non fuisset, aurum purum esse non potuisset, nec haberetur in eo proficuum. Et id est suum capitulum et sua tota correctio, quod videlicet una pars alchimie super .m. partes argenti ponatur, et efficietur rubicundum atque purissimum, secundum modum quem diximus, si deus altissimus et magnus voluerit, quia non est fortitudo nec auxilium nisi dei altissimi magni volente."

Explicit liber iste scilicet Morieni. Deo gratias. Amen.[64]

63. P ends here.
64. V: "Explicit liber morieni romani ad Regem Calich"

men trust, are false and come to no good issue. The whole key to accomplishment of this operation is in the fire, with which the minerals are prepared and the bad spirits held back, and with which the spirit and body are joined. Fire is the true test of this entire matter. And if the truth of anything pertaining to this magistery is not at once apparent, that will come to nothing, so when it does not spring up nor mingle with the impure substance to form one body, you will look in vain for something of that which you seek to come forth. For when you do as I have told you, you will find what you seek, God willing. Now know this well, and understand and remember it, and know the composition of this matter and give it much study, which will reveal to you the straight path. Nor can anything more then be hidden from you. And even more fundamental is it that you know what the higher minerals are, so that the entire work be not ruined. But in answer to your question about the white vapor, or virgin's milk, you may know that it is a tincture and spirit of those bodies already dissolved and dead, from which the spirits have been withdrawn. Then the spirits are again restored to them. But any body lacking spirit is dark. It is the white vapor that flows in the body and removes its darkness, or earthiness, and impurity, uniting the bodies into one and augmenting their waters. For the black impurity is not persistent, and when its blackness is removed, the water will thus be strengthened and increased, so that its beauty will appear and the tincture will be accomplished in it. You should know this well and understand it, and know that when you have thus accomplished the tincture in it, you are on the right track toward that finest red gold, than which nothing better or purer is to be found. For this reason it is called Roman gold. Without the white vapor, there could have been no pure gold nor any profit in it. Now the sum and full proof of it is in placing one part of this alchemy on a thousand parts of silver, which will be reddened and purified, just as we have said, if great God most high so wills, for there is no strength nor help except by the will of great God most high."

Here ends the book of Morienus, as it is called. Thanks be to God, amen.

COMMENTARY

Commentary

In the year 1559 there appeared in Paris a small volume purporting to be the "Booklet of Morienus Romanus, of old the Hermit of Jerusalem, on the Transfiguration of the Metals and the Whole of the Ancient Philosophers' Occult Arts, Never Before Published."[1] According to the preface, a certain Robertus Castrenis had undertaken to translate the work from Arabic; in explaining alchemy for the first time in Latin, it confirmed both the Old and New Testaments, but was originally the work of Hermes the Triplex, the Egyptian king, philosopher, and prophet revered as inventor of all mechanical skills as well as the liberal arts. A closing notation dated completion of the translation on February 11, 1182.

Thus set afloat, the Latin Morienus has continued to sail through the history of science as the first work on alchemy to reach the West. The same publisher put out a second edition in 1564, and in 1572 the text was printed in a large collection of alchemical tracts published at Basel. That collection, the "Two Volumes on the Goldmaking, or Chemic, Artifice" (*Artis auriferae quam chemiam vocant volumina duo*), became a standard among the growing number of anthologies on the subject, investing the texts it contained with encyclopedic authority. Here, Morienus appeared in company with the greats of the art, with Aristotle, Merlin, Avicenna, Maria Prophetissa, Arnold of Villa Nova, Roger Bacon, and all the fantastic company of seers and prophets called upon to witness the truth and authority of the works carried under those names. Morienus' contribution continued to be anthologized over the next two hundred years, as

1. *Morieni Romani, Quondam Eremitae Hierosolymitani, de transfiguratione metallorum, & occulta, summaque antiquorum Philosophorum medicina, Libellus, nusquam hactenus in lucem editus.* Paris, apud Gulielmum Guillard, in via Iacobaea, sub diuae Barbarae signo. 1559.

well as appearing in separate editions and translations into German, English and French.[2]

When Newtonian science at last pushed alchemy aside, the great library of chemosophical texts that had accumulated became a repository of curiosities. Bibliophiles collected the handsomely illustrated editions, mystics pored over the romantically obscure allegories, and historians of chemistry and philosophy tried to put the alchemical authors into some sort of order. Robertus Castrensis, it was thought, should be the same as the Englishman Robert of Ketton, who upon commission by the Abbot of Cluny produced the first Latin version of the Koran in 1143 and later translated several important Arabic tracts on mathematics. Robert of Ketton liked to date his translations with the flourish of referring to several eras, usually including the Spanish reckoning, by which the date 1182 appended to the Morienus translation would correspond to A.D. 1144. That was therefore accepted as the moment at which the Latin world first received an alchemical work.

The translation's date and authorship, however, appeared rather doubtful to more precise critical attention. First, alchemical writers and translators had a notorious penchant for pseudepigraphy, releasing their works, intended of course as quasi-divine scriptures, under the names of kings, gods, or scholars, living, mythical, or dead. Renaissance publishers borrowed this practice both to add the sheen of age and authority to popular tracts and to clothe pirated editions in respectability. Further, Morienus' impenetrable elucidations were not of the same quality as other works that had required the attention of Robert of Ketton. The Robert of the Morienus preface undertook to translate "such a masterpiece" only with reluctant excuses for his youth and scanty Latin. Would someone who had just done the Koran have been so modest or so impressed? The legend of Hermes, third incarnation of Mercury and father of alchemy, was carried with very similar wording in other Latin prefaces to other Latin works printed in impressive anthologies put out by respected publishers.

2. Full documentation, when not given here, is to be found in my article "The Original Text of the Latin *Morienus*," *Ambix*, 17 (1970), 1–12.

How much had this Robert borrowed? Perhaps most suspicious of all was the claim to authorship of the translation announced in the preface. "I have thought it well to place my name before the prologue, lest some other take my work and lay claim to its rewards as his own. In short, I humbly implore and entreat my fellows to bear me no envy, as so often happens. For God well knows that the spirit can proceed only from one whom he by his grace has inspired. It is therefore but proper that we rejoice in the powers the Creator of all has granted to each." Beneath such flagrant modesty hides plagiarism.

The work itself can scarcely be dismissed as a complete forgery. Morienus and Khālid, about whom more will be said later, are traditional personages in Arabic alchemy. At least some of the doctrines Morienus propounds are obviously of considerable antiquity, appearing in Greek tracts from the early part of the Christian era. A few literal parallels also exist in Arabic, although no complete Arabic source for the Latin text is known.

Still, the printed version cannot be accepted in toto as a genuine early document of Western alchemy. Over a third of the text is taken up by a prologue given first to a pedigree of Morienus' adepthood, reaching back through Adfar of Alexandria to Hermes, and then to Khālid's diligent search for a genuine practitioner of the art (he had had much trouble with charlatans), all narrated with great stress upon Morienus' Christian asceticism and piety. This part is also as diffuse stylistically as it is discursive in theme, altogether uncharacteristic of a twelfth-century scientific work. Obviously, the Latin Morienus was much expanded and revised before reaching print.

The textual history of the Latin version before it was printed can be reconstructed by studying the large number of manuscripts that have survived, which are found to fall into several distinct classes (see chart, Appendix I). Five manuscripts, including two of the oldest, contain a version that is clearly more primitive than the others, representing the earliest recoverable Latin stage and hence forming the basis for the text as it is edited here. These five are listed in the first column of the chart, with the initials used to identify them in the notes, and collectively labeled *M-K* ("Morienus-Khālid") as a family.

In four other manuscripts, a different text begins at the point where Morienus' actual instruction of Khālid starts. This revised dialogue, labeled text *A* in the chart, is essentially identical with the corresponding part of the printed version; it is clearly based directly on the *K* text of the *M-K* family and is therefore more recent. Nothing new was added, but the Latinity was considerably improved, Morienus was made even more loquaciously pious, and some of the cruder obscurities were compounded with rather more elegant ones. The effect in sum was to modernize the work. And it is in connection with this stage that the name of Robertus Castrensis first appears.

Our text begins in Digby 162 (O_1 of the present edition) on folio 21^v with a rubric: "Prima translacio libri morieni" ("First translation of the book of Morienus"). The section containing text *A* starts at the top of folio 23 with another rubric, written in the top margin above the lineation: "Translacio ultima libri morieni secundum magistrum Robertum cestrensem" ("Original translation of the book of Morienus according to Master Robert of Chester") (see Plate I). The last two lines of text within the lineation on folio 28^v, at the end of the work, read: "Explicit liber alkimie de arabico in latinum translatus" ("Here ends the book of alchemy translated from Arabic into Latin"). Then come three more lines, added in the lower margin: "Era .m.c.lxxx. secundo. mense frebuarii, et in eius die .xi. in hora .viii. eiusdem diei. Explicit." ("In the 1182d year of the era, in February, on the 11th day, at the 8th hour. The end.") (see Plate II).

Although written in the same hand as the text, the last three lines were clearly added as an afterthought. Only in one other place does the text overflow the carefully planned justification: the rubric naming Robertus Castrensis. Since rubrics were customarily added later, the text scribe would leave spaces for them and for other ornamentation such as initials or miniatures. But no space was left for the Robertus Castrensis heading. It, too, was plainly an afterthought, placed above the text in the margin, not at the head of the work, but over the section that had been revised.

Obviously, neither the name nor the date was directly asso-

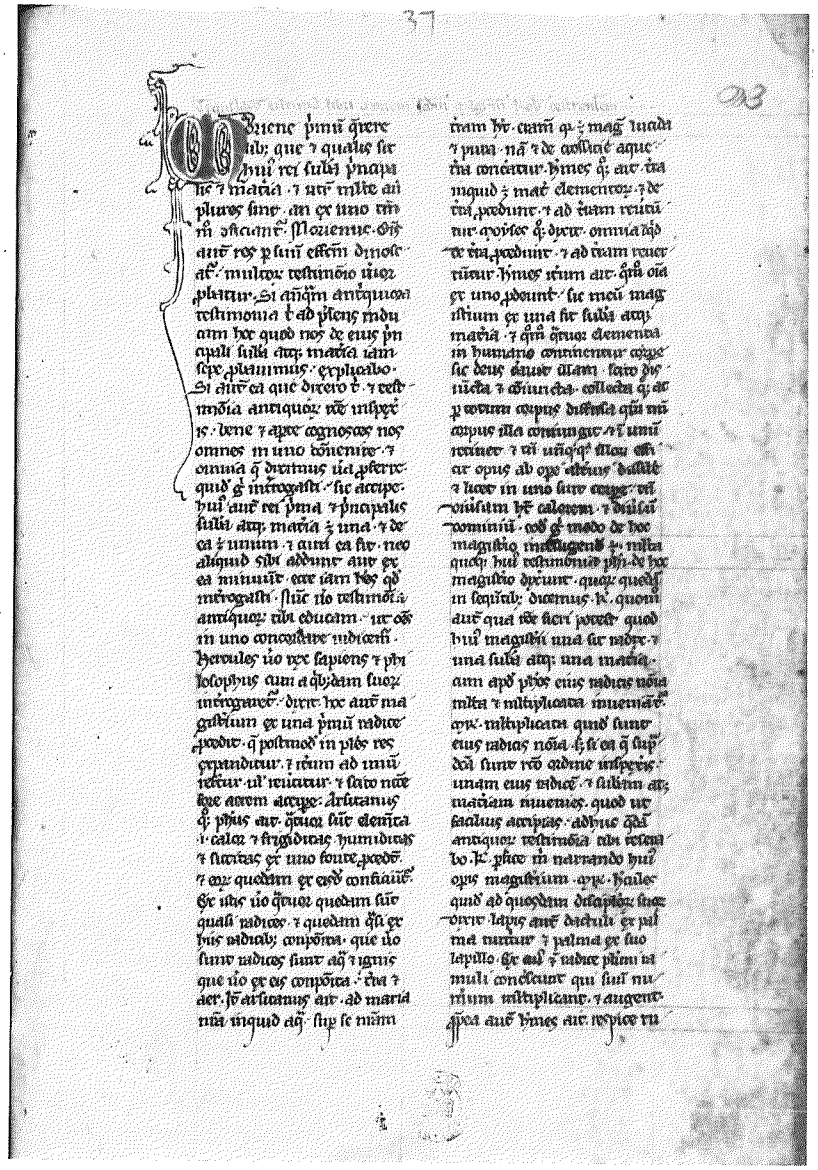

PLATE I. Ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 162, f. 23.

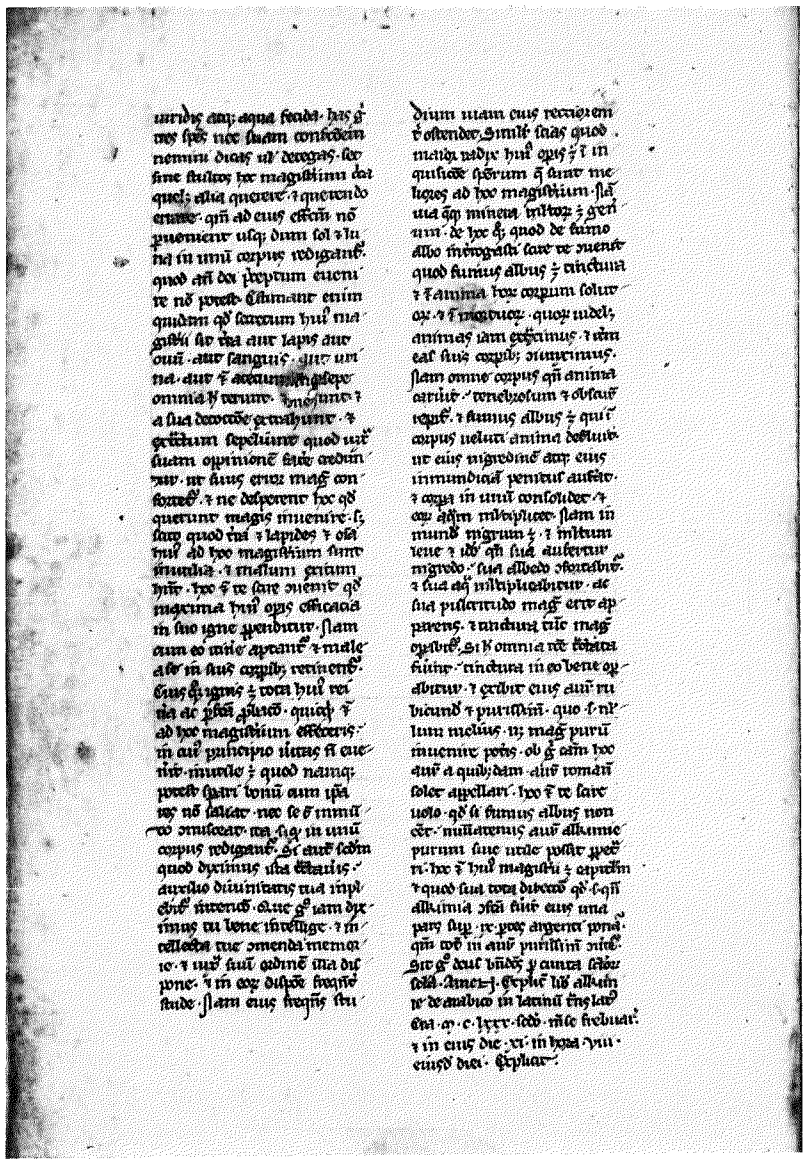

PLATE II. Ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 162, f. 28v.

ciated with the Book of Morienus at the time Digby 162 was written (late thirteenth century). They were attached to help authenticate the revision.

The revised text *A* became standard, appearing in most of the other manuscripts. In M, the last member of the *M-K* family, written in 1507–08, the copyist abandoned the older text about halfway through, switching to the more modern *A* version. *A* was also copied separately, without the prologue, appearing thus in at least fifteen manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. A number of these close with the remark that the work was translated from Arabic, and three add the date, February 11, 1182, but none mentions the authorship of the translation.

A copy of the Robertus Castrensis preface almost as it appears in the printed Morienus is contained in a Berlin manuscript from the second half of the thirteenth century, but not in association with a Morienus text.[3] The preface instead serves to introduce a work of Hermes called "The Seven Tracts" or "The Golden Tract in Seven Chapters," which the scribe seems to have thought was Morienus' edition of Hermes' great secret testament: "Here begins the book on the composition of alchemy which Morienus produced for the great king of the Egyptians, which Robertus Castrensis translated from Arabic into Latin." By "great [or ancient] king of the Egyptians" ("regi alto egiptorum"), the writer means Hermes, not Khālid. The source for the legend that Morienus had first promulgated Hermes' writing was also probably the literal source of the several versions of the Robertus Castrensis preface. That source in main substance was a retelling of the myth that there were three ancient sages or patriarchs identified as Hermes, or incarnations of the god Mercury, the last of whom was Hermes Trismegistos ("thrice-great"), the inventor of alchemy. In Arabic, the first was made the grandson of Adam and builder of the pyramids, in which he and his sons were buried

3. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Qu. 584, formerly Boncompagni 439. See Julius Ruska, "Turba Philosophorum," *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Medizin*, 1 (Berlin, 1931), 71–72.

and which were also used as workshops by the third Hermes for performance of his alchemical operations.[4] The earliest known Latin version of this myth forms the prologue to Hermes' "The Six Fundamentals" (*de vi. rerum principiis*), one manuscript of which may date from the late twelfth century. The first Hermes, so the story goes, was also called Enoch and Mercury, the second Noah and Mercury, and the last Hermes Mercurius Triplex, being at once king, philosopher, and prophet. Governing Egypt after the flood, he excelled in the liberal and mechanical arts, concerning which he wrote numerous treatises. He was also the first to discover alchemy. The great philosopher Morienus, by long study of Hermes' writings, eventually was able to produce a detailed treatment of alchemy.

The idea persisted, therefore, that Hermes' works were transmitted by Morienus, so that versions of this legend were regularly used as prologues or introductions to works ascribed to either. Such an introduction occurs at the head of an unpublished Latin commentary on the famous alchemical code known as the Emerald Tablet, regarded as the original Hermetic testament. This introduction does not mention Morienus, but the three known copies of this commentary immediately precede a slightly abridged and rearranged Morienus-Khālid dialogue which I have referred to in the chart as text *B*. The intention behind this compounding was probably to expand on Hermes' traditional role as Morienus' divine source in order to emphasize the legend of a patriarchal origin and Christian descent of alchemy.

Yet another version of the three-Mercuries prologue introduces Morienus, in place of Robertus Castrensis, as translator of the book produced for Khālid.[5] The wording of this version otherwise exactly parallels that of the printed preface until the point at which the author of the latter breaks off his definition of alchemy to praise God for his gifts as a translator. The manuscript version here continues the definition for several more lines, echoing wordings found at the head of other works defining alchemy and attributed to Hermes or others. The work immediately following is the *de vi. rerum principiis*, but farther on in the same codex a copy of the Morienus text *A* appears (see chart below, Appendix I), to which an interesting emendation has been made. The title, "Questions of King Kalib and Answers of Morienus concerning everything by which the Hermetic magistery is accomplished," is struck through, and in the margin the reader is directed to "see prologue to this book at the beginning of this volume." The scribe did not associate prologue and Morienus text until after copying both separately (both are in the same hand).

It appears that it was not until the fifteenth century that Robertus Castrensis, Morienus, Hermes, and Khālid were all put together to form the story that was then printed a hundred years later. The longer version of Khālid's quest must also have been written when the compounding was done, since it is found only in the *R-A* (for "Robertus") family of manuscripts (see Appendix I). At least three complete versions exist, one of which, that in ms. Bibliothèque Nationale 14,005, was the direct source of the first printed edition. With unusual candor, the printer, Guillaume Guillard, discussed his sources in a foreword.[6] The work, he declared, translated "somehow or other" from Arabic, had recently been praised at length, but never published. Shortly before, he had come upon two "very ancient" copies of it, differing considerably—one anonymous, the other under the name of Robertus Castrensis. He elected to publish the latter, finding it somewhat less corrupt in style as well as more complete, containing much "by no means superfluous" that was lacking in the other, although he printed variants from the shorter version in the margin. From the spellings it can be established that in addition to the Bibliothèque Nationale 14,005 copy, he had before him the one in Bibliothèque Nationale 7156, the text P of the present edition.

4. See J. W. Fück, "The Arabic Literature on Alchemy According to An-Nadim (a.d. 987)," *Ambix*, 4 (1951), 81 ff.; and E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Edinburgh, 1957), 97 ff.

5. Vatican library, Palatine 1339 (14th century), fol. 1^{v}.

6. I have collated the editions of 1559, 1564, and Hannover 1593, in the Houghton Library of Harvard University.

Enough has been said here to show how freely alchemical literature was treated by the early copyists, who went at their task of borrowing, revising, and attributing with such zeal that any historical study of the Latin printed works is a very frustrating business, leading not back to sources but around in circles.

In the present case, study of the manuscripts has shown that the printed version of the Latin Morienus was arrived at only after several hundred years of editing and revising. By the end of the thirteenth century, at least three distinct redactions were in existence, one of which, the most archaic, was probably based directly on the original translation from Arabic. At the time the first extensive revision was produced, late in the thirteenth century, the translation was ascribed to Robert of Ketton and the date was attached. By this time also, a tradition was current that Hermes' secret writings had been preserved and transmitted by Morienus. Robert of Ketton or even Morienus himself were said to have translated Morienus' compendium into Latin. But the Latin version then current scarcely mentioned Hermes among the host of alchemical ancestors, focusing instead on the Arab heritage through Khālid. The prologue was therefore rewritten to begin the tradition with Hermes Trismegistos and prefaced with the legend explaining who he was. These last changes were probably not made until sometime in the first half of the fifteenth century.

In general, the entire Latin tradition of the Morienus text appears to derive from a single source, which was certainly a translation from Arabic. No Arabic original is known, but a number of identical passages are found in an Arabic tract written about 1250, the "Book of Knowledge Acquired Concerning the Cultivation of Gold," by Abu'l-Qāsim Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Irāqī. Most of the coinciding passages are quotations from supposedly ancient authorities, whose names typically underwent many a weird distortion in transliteration. Abu'l-Qāsim also quotes liberally from alchemical verse attributed to Khālid, whose reputation as a poet, though disputed by modern scholars, rests on a tradition of some antiquity. Khālid, as quoted by Abu'l-Qāsim, often directly paraphrases quotations and recipes which, according to the Latin text, he must have learned from Morienus.[7] Other quotations echoed in the Latin text are found in a thirteenth-century commentary on a work by the tenth-century alchemist Abū Abdallāh Muhammad ibn Umail at-Tamīmī, known in Latin as Senior Zadith filius Hamuel.[8] Both the work by Abu'l-Qāsim and the Ibn Umail commentary are approximately contemporary with the oldest Latin Morienus texts, indicating that all three probably derive from an Arabic source perhaps written not much earlier. That source in turn was surely compiled from doctrines of considerable antiquity. Among the earliest alchemical works to survive is a Greek fragment dating perhaps from the second century A.D., presenting a dialogue between Cleopatra and her court philosophers. Several passages provided the substance of what is repeated by Morienus to Khālid as animal, vegetable, or meteorological parables. Relevant excerpts from these works are found in Appendix II, below.

Another general feature of interest is that throughout the Latin versions, Khālid, the heathen "king," is treated very courteously. The devoutly Christian Morienus examines him and finds him worthy of carrying on the great secret tradition. A similar attitude of tolerance pervades the late literature of chivalry, in which the non-Christian aristocracy, whose prototype was Saladin, was accorded the same generous and noble virtues by which Christian knighthood was defined in the person and rule of Frederick Barbarossa.

Khālid, a familiar authority in both Arabic and Latin alchemy, belongs also to history. He was a minor son of the second Um-

7. See E. J. Holmyard's edition and translation of Abu'l-Qāsim's work, Paris, 1923; there is a copy of this rare publication in the Yale Divinity School Library. Holmyard collates the text with the printed Morienus in his article on Abu'l-Qāsim in *Isis*, 8 (1926), 403–426. The correspondence with the version edited here, however, is much closer, since the printed version contains numerous interpolations. See Appendix II, below.

8. Julius Ruska, "Studien zu Muhammad ibn Umail al-Tamīmīs *Kitāb al-Ma' al-Waraqī wa'l-Ard an-Najmīyah*," *Isis*, 24 (1936), 310–342. See also the article "Ibn Umayl" in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

mayyad calif Yazīd, and would have succeeded to the califate except for a typical complex of intrigues and murders following the death of his older brother in 682. Later biographers agree in reporting that Khālid turned to the arts in the hope of some recompense for the lost califate, meaning, of course, to the study of alchemy, which alone among the arts promised a return of wealth that might substitute for royal privilege. Here history ends and legend begins, although it is plausible enough, as the same biographers report, that Khālid was the first to commission translations into Arabic of Greek works on science and medicine. He was also praised as having written much alchemical verse himself. He died in either 704 or 708.

It is in Khālid's symbolic role as patron of the Islamic succession to classical knowledge that he appears in the Latin Morienus. Alchemical literature both in Arabic and Greek made a convention of the instructive dialogue. The adept or philosopher typically played the role of informant to royalty, as personified by the legendary Egyptian priest Ostanes, who indoctrinated the King of India, or Stephanos of Alexandria, court mathematician to the Byzantine emperor Herakleios I (610–641). At least to some extent, Stephanos and Herakleios provided the models for Morienus and Khālid. The emperor was reputed to have combined statesmanship with love of learning, but to have neglected the former as Stephanos won his attention to the latter. Herakleios' gesture of restoring the relic of the True Cross to Jerusalem earned him a place in Christian legend, from which it followed that with Stephanos' aid he had combined alchemy with Christianity. Thus Stephanos, his name transliterated as Adfar, appears in Latin as Morienus' teacher and the ultimate source of Christian alchemy. Although Stephanos' extant Greek works scarcely document such a role, the fact is that Monophysite and Nestorian Christian exiles from Constantinople carried Greek knowledge and lore, including alchemy, with them into Syria, Persia, and Egypt in the fifth and sixth centuries. The Arabs first received alchemical doctrine largely through Christian refugees who had settled in their domains, a process synopsized in the Morienus-Khālid tale. It is implied even in the earliest Latin version that Morienus was a Christian (see above, pp. 6–7); his epithet

"Romanus," carried prominently through all the Latin editions, surely resulted from misinterpretation of the Arabic *rūmī*, meaning Romaic, or Byzantine Greek. Nothing connects Morienus with Rome; he instructs Khālid in Greek history and science, thus according precisely both with the historical role played by Greek transmitters of science and also with the legend that Khālid patronized translations from Greek. But to Western scholars in the time of the Crusades, a Christian was a Roman. The author of the last Latin revision expanded on the Christian tradition connected with Adfar-Stephanos and Morienus to produce a story claiming, in effect, that alchemy was originally a Christian doctrine which had at last been delivered from its Babylonian captivity by the pious translator Robert of Ketton, famed interpreter of Islamic scripture.

Now who was Morienus? There is no historical background such as for Stephanos and Khālid to lend him substance. His kinship is rather with the throng of mythical patriarchs and demigods revered as founders and protectors of early arcane science. He is mentioned before the middle of the tenth century by Ibn Umail in connection with Khālid, but Ibn an-Nadīm, writing only a few years later, said that Khālid's translator was named Stephanos. Ibn an-Nadīm merely mentions Morienus[9] in a list of fifty-one philosophers, nowhere connecting him with either Stephanos or Khālid. The legend that Khālid had sought and obtained enlightenment directly from a monk named Stephanos persisted into the thirteenth century, as is documented by an Arabic compilation written about 1210 A.D.[10] It seems that Morienus enjoyed little prominence before the age of Latin translation began.

Writing about 1260, the biographer Ibn Khallikān stated that Khālid "learned the art from a Greek monk, whose name was Marianos, and he treated of it in three epistles, one of which

9. Manuscript variants can be read as Marianos, Maryānas, Mawyānas, Muranus, etc.

10. H. E. Stapleton and R. F. Azo, "An Alchemical Compilation of the Thirteenth Century, A.D.," *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, III, 2 (1910), p. 61.

contains the relation of what passed between Marianos and himself, the manner in which he learned the science, and the enigmatical allusions employed by his master."[11] This description agrees very well with the general shape of the Latin text and therefore probably refers to the work which was its source. The Latin tradition unanimously installed Morienus as the author, while Ibn Khallikān refers to a work by Khālid, but it should be noted that in the earliest Latin version recovered here it is Ghālib, Khālid's major-domo, who actually wrote the account, not Morienus.[12]

The Morienus tract may have been composed relatively late in the Arabic alchemical period as a polemic in support of a tradition threatened with obsolescence. As we know it in Latin, it energetically defends an alchemical orthodoxy that had evolved out of late Greek scientific thought. From Aristotle's affirmation that all matter was basically but one substance, altered in external qualities only by the accidence of form, governed by combinations of the four elemental humors, it followed that any given type of matter could be transmuted into any other form by manipulation of the determining humors. Natural processes such as reproduction and decay gave countless examples of physical changes which were accounted for according to this scheme and rehearsed as florid allegories in alchemical writings. The fundamental idea was that the raw material to be manipulated must first be "killed" and caused to putrefy, thus separating the *Urstoff* or primeval element from the spirits, exhalations, or humors responsible for its specific form. The "body" could then be cleansed, dismembered, rearranged or otherwise suitably doctored in preparation for its "resurrection" by restoring to it a carefully adjusted balance of ennobling spiritual principles. While Greek writers on this topic were inclined to employ allegory as their

11. *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, tr. Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris, 1842–71), I, 481.

12. Gerard of Cremona, the most prolific of 12th-century translators, produced his version of Ptolemy's *Almagest* with the help of a Mozarab dragoman named Ghālib. See Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, II (New York, 1923), 88–89.

main technique, the great Arab theorists generally moved in a more experimental direction, ingeniously combining astrology and number magic with patterns observed in metallurgical reactions. An empirical school of thought soon emerged, headed by Abu Ali ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, 980–1037), who denied that alchemical methods could accomplish any real transmutation of one metallic species into another, the individual natures of which Ibn Sīnā regarded as intrinsic and unknown. Such an idea struck directly at the one stout pillar that had supported chemical theory since Aristotle. The reaction to this heresy was considerable and generally successful. Morienus' longwinded insistence on the idea that all things are derived solely from a single thing or matter or principle (*res*) locates him squarely among the orthodox authorities arrayed against the renegade theorists following Ibn Sīnā.

Although traditional from an alchemical point of view, the Morienus tract is altogether remarkable in the context of Western philosophy. As has been noted, it was converted into a testament to the claim that alchemy had been practiced by Christian adepts long before passing into Islamic hands, and attention therefore centered also around the legend, which needed considerable underpinning, that it was the first Latin document of the art. A quite unusual notion buried in Morienus' doctrine seems to have been almost overlooked.

For all his enlightened piety, Khālid is rather blunt when it comes to grasping the ethereal character of the alchemical principle. Morienus eventually likens it to life itself (page 26–27), which is quite in order from an Aristotelian point of view, but then he launches into an allegorical scheme for synthesizing even this vital force, winding up with an actual demonstration (pp. 38–39). Such doings, it seems, should have been reason for assigning his work to the category of a rather soiled white magic at best. But habits of Western thought prevailing at the time provided a stratagem for meeting scientific blasphemy. Throughout the Latin literature on the subject, the alchemical process is treated symbolically. The base matter, of course, was man, corrupted by sin; the elixir was the cleansing power of the holy spirit; and so on.

Consequently, the ultimate attainable by the Great Work was an *imitatio*, an approach to perfection as symbolized by alchemical gold, which, it should be noted, was generally held to be something different from gold of natural origin. The focus in Latin is always on the alchemist himself, however exotic and unfailing his secret repertoire of processes may be. European alchemical literature overflows with delightful legends of adepts who attained magical longevity by virtue of their chemical accomplishments. The successful practitioner was typically revered as an ancient man whose physical well being, in addition to his wealth, marked outwardly the nobility of spirit derived from inward transmutation. But at last he died. Even the "divine" Hermes himself, patron and source of alchemy, was depicted as a mortal relic. His corpse, according to the immensely popular and influential legend of the Emerald Table, was discovered in a talismanic crypt by an astrologically predestined king or hero who thus succeeded to adepthood. The tincture or elixir, too, was limited to a specifically quantitative power; one part of it would convert a hundred parts or a thousand parts of base metal into purest gold, but the proportion was always given precisely.

Alchemy has suffered the misfortune of being classed as a science from a modern point of view—as a chrysopoietic technology—which has occluded our view of its system. Scientific it certainly was when it first reached the West sometime late in the twelfth century, but in a thoroughly medieval sense, in which nothing, science least of all, could be separated from ethics, morals, and religion. For if science could not substantiate man's claim on immortality, what use was it? In the hands of the Schoolmen, therefore, as well as of their heretical opponents, the technique of goldmaking was treated as subsidiary to the meaning of success in its practice.

This is the whole point of the classical alchemical myth as performed by Hermes-Adfar-Morienus-Khālid and preached by Robertus Castrensis, spokesman and lay reader of science. The adept has to be morally worthy; his magisterium only witnesses the degree of refinement in virtue he has personally attained. Nobility of birth, ascetic faith, piety, and humility were still the

fundamental requisites, failing which the magic elixir would certainly elude the seeker after knowledge.

But with attainment of that knowledge began the departure from pure eschatology. The adept, having accomplished the Great Work, attained something finite, symbolized in wealth, which would have no value except as passed on to worthy followers. At the bottom of the alchemical myth, therefore, is the oldest and best-loved of all stories, the tale of how father gives to son. Morienus, nearing the end of his tenure as guardian of the great secret, dedicates to his eager and puzzled heir something he must at last describe as life itself. And shall science ever seek aught else?

	M-K	*M-A*	*A*	*R-A*	*B*
	Original Morienus prologue, inc: "In nomine domini pii et misericordis . . ." plus Khālid dialogue, inc: "Explana michi bona explanatione hoc quod interrogo . . ."	Original Morienus prologue plus revised dialogue, inc: "O Moriene, primum querere libet que et qualis sit huiusmodi rei principalis substancia . . ."	Revised dialogue only	Robertus Castrensis preface, inc: "Legimus in historiis veterum divinorum tres fuisse philosophos . . ." plus revised prologue, inc: "Omnes philosophiae partes mens Hermetis divina plenarie attigit . . ." plus revised dialogue	Revised and abridged dialogue only, inc: "O Moriene, manifesta michi magisterium lapidis philosophorum . . ."
13th Century	Glasgow, Hunterian Library 253, 46^{v}–53^{v} (G) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 7156, 197–201^{v} (P)	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 162, 21^{v}–28^{v} (21^{v}–22: O_1)	Cambridge, Trinity College 0.8.25, 133–140^{v} Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 6514, 135–137^{v} (frag.)	(Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Q584, 23: variant frag. of preface. Does not mention Khālid.)	
14th Century	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 7158, 102–110^{v} (copy of P)	London, British Museum, Harley 3703, 2–18 (2–4: L) Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.2.18, 145–151^{v} (145–146: C)	Palermo, Biblioteca Comunale, 4. Qq. A. 10, §6. Cambridge, University Library, add. 4087, 255–264. Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, Pal. 1339, 69–72.	(Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, Pal. 1339, 1^{v}: variant frag. of preface. Does not mention Robertus.)	
15th Century	Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, 5477, 63^{v}–73^{v} (V)				

	M-K	*M-A*	*A*	*R-A*	*B*
15th Century		Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 238, 16–22 (16^{r-v}: O_2	Cambridge, University Library, Ii. III. 17, 59–68^{v} Oxford, Bodleian Library, E.Mus. 63, 93–95 (frag.) London, British Museum, Sloane 2327, 17^{v}–22 (frag.) Copenhagen, Kongelike Bibliotek, GKS 236, 91^{v}–96. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 7161, 19–23^{v}. Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 168 (180), 61–69. Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, Pal. 978, 58–58^{v} (frag.) San Marino (California), Huntington Library, HU 1051, 38^{v}–39^{v}, 49–49^{v}, 125 (frag.)	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 14,005, 1–16. Bethlehem (Pennsylvania), Lehigh University Library, 1, 185^{v}–196^{v}. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 14,005, 80–80^{v}: preface only; 101^{v}–103^{v}: prologue only. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 7162, 56^{v}: frag. of preface.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1450, 47–53^{v}. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 99, pp. 1–6. *Cambridge, Gonville Caius College, 181, pp. 374–380. *Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.7.35, 106^{v}–119. *Cambridge, University Library, Ff. VI. 50, 67^{v}–80^{v}. *Directly preceded by *capitulum Hermetis.*
16th century	Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. lat. mon. 26, 059, 216–238^{v} (216–230^{v}: M)		Oxford, Bodleian Library, 1486, 9–14; 1478, 30–37^{v}.	Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, Barb. 334, 1–9. Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magliabechiano xvi. 77, 31^{v}–33: preface only.	

APPENDIX II

1. Extracts from Abu'l-Qāsim Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-'Irāqī *Kitāb al-'ilm al-muktasab fī zirā'at adh-dhahab*, "Book of Knowledge Acquired Concerning the Cultivation of Gold," edited and translated by E. J. Holmyard, Paris, 1923.

(*p. 34:*) Understand this preface, therefore, for indeed it is an important part of this Science, and if you know it you will be able to comprehend the allusions of the Sages.

Heraclius said to one of his pupils: "As for (its state) in the beginning, verily it is from one root, and while in the later parts it is diversified, yet at the end it becomes again one single thing."

Pythagoras said: "Just as all things originate from the One, so this Art is from one thing and one essence only. And just as in the body of man there are four natures (which Allah created) gathered together in one body, each of them performing a function different from that of the others, and each having definite equilibrium and colour and power, so is this thing". And some of the evidences of the Sages are on this wise, so follow them.

Marianus said to Khalid ibn Yazid: "As for thy question concerning the Root, 'Is it from one thing or from divers things?', verily it is one thing and one root and one essence and one species; to it there is nothing added and from it there is nothing removed."

Heraclius said to one of his pupils: "Verily the date-stone comes from the date-palm, and the date-palm comes also from the date-stone, and from the kernel the tree grows and many branches grow out from its root." Similarly,

Hermes Trismegistus said: "O Sages! Consider the red which is perfect and that which is imperfect, and the perfect yellow and that which is imperfect, and the black which is perfect and that which is imperfect—each one of these is from one root."

Sergius the Monk said: "Consider the tailor, how he takes one piece of cloth and cuts it up part by part and makes from

it body and sleeves and gores and hems, then combines them after that and reconverts them into one thing. In the same way, this our Art is from one thing, hidden and treasured with the Sages, who deliberately keep it secret from the ignorant. And they have named it with the best of names and it is placed in the most noble of places. It is both hidden and displayed: the wise know it and honor it, while the ignorant fools despise it and treat it with contempt."

(*p. 35*) Have you not considered the sperm and its change into blood, then into a tiny piece of flesh, then into the embryo, and then into form after form until it becomes a complete man? Yet that which would explain its growth and properties is not seen until it has attained its final stages.

Of the same sort are lead and wheat and milk, and many other things—they are all one thing at first, and then are changed by treatment and given many new colours and names and natures.

And Ares said to Caesar: "O Caesar, the first thing which caused men to fall into error was the multitude of names, but as for him who knoweth that (these names) referred to colours which appear, verily he will not go astray from the path." He asked him also and said: "Expound unto me concerning these colours which change from colour to colour: are they from one compound or from various compounds?" He said: "Nay, from one compound and one thing: and as often as the fire gives it a new colour we give it a new name."

Zosimus said to Euthasia: "I would cause thee to know that the Sages did not make their speech obscure and the operations manifold except to repel the ignorant. But those of them who are familiar with the multitude of operations which they mentioned and described in their books do not need more than one operation, one work and one way. It is thus with all the sayings of the Sages; although they diversified the names and descriptions, they nevertheless meant thereby only one thing, one way and one operation. So ask not for further proof after this. For indeed, the Sages mentioned compositions and operations and weights and colours in profusion, rendering them obscure in order to mislead men; but they lied not."

(*p. 40*) A Sage said, when asked by a pupil of his, "Should any operation be carried out before the operation proper?", "Yes! an operation which is not an operation." He said, "What is it?" He replied, "Thou shouldst send the water upon the earth that it may be permeated thereby, for by the water it is dissolved and putrefied."

(*p. 52*) Khalid said to Marianus, "Tell me of the second remedy, is that like the first operation?" He said, "Yes. When thou hast finished the cure of this body, add to it one fourth part of the leaven. And know that the leaven of gold is gold, and that the leaven of bread is therefrom, and there can be no rectifying except by means thereof. Place this fourth part of the leaven with the leaven of gold, and add as much leaven of leaven as is suitable for it and set it to mature in the sun until it becomes homogeneous and a single body. Then begin the ablution, after having sought the blessing of Allah and His aid; pour on the substance some of the poison and mature it therewith three days, and take care not to diminish the time even by a little, and be not unmindful of the fire, that it become not too violent and destroy thy cauldron, for then thou wouldst grieve over that which was therein.

"Then return to thy cauldron after seven days, and if the portion of liquid thou hast added be drunk up, moisten the substance with a portion of white of egg and increase the strength of the fire a little until this be absorbed. If it get dry, moisten it with pure water as thou didst at first, and continue this moistening and heating until it has taken up all the remaining water and nothing thereof is left. Then will appear the blossoms and the colours will change and the Elixir will clothe itself in the raiment of kings and make thy labours sweet. It is stable even in great heat for a period of 21 days. All this is found in the books of the Sages, therefore seek, and ye shall find it explained and expounded and made clear."

Extract from the commentary on the works of Ibn Umail in Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplément arabe 1074, 142^{v}; French translation by M. O. Houdas in M. Berthelot, *La chimie au moyen age*, III (Paris, 1893), 124–125.

When asked by Safendja, king of Said, Marqūnas, the king of Egypt, son of Tsebet, king of Abyssinia, replied: "Nothing is commoner on earth than this mysterious thing; there is more of it on the face of the earth than anything else whatever; it is there in the midst of rich and poor, among travelers and those who are settled. Without it, all creatures would die."

Marianos the monk said to his maternal uncle: "It is the most essential thing for your health, and if it did not exist, you would die."

The sage Democritus said to Queen Theosebeia: "When you put your hand in your purse, keep it there, or it will be your ruin. This mysterious ingredient of the work is not to be bought at any price. Do not thus debase it." . . .

Maria, the daughter of King Saba, said: "This is a mysterious and marvelous thing. It is despised and trampled under foot. But the contempt in which it is held is a heavenly fortune, so that fools know nothing of it and it continues in neglect."

Extract from the *Dialogue of Cleopatra and the Philosophers,* translated by F. Sherwood Taylor, *The Alchemists* (New York, 1949), 58–59.

Ostanes and those with him answered Cleopatra. "In thee is concealed a strange and terrible mystery. Enlighten us, casting your light upon the elements. Tell us how the highest descends to the lowest and how the lowest rises to the highest, and how that which is in the midst approaches the highest and is united to it, and what is the element which accomplishes these things. And tell us how the blessed waters visit the corpses lying in Hades fettered and afflicted in darkness and how the medicine of Life reaches them and rouses them as if wakened by their possessors from sleep . . ."